

The

FREETHINKER

FOUNDED · 1881

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

VOL. LII—No. 43

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 23, 1932

PRICE THREEPENCE

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

Views and Opinions.

Wolves in Sheep's Clothing.

DEAN SWIFT had a very ingenious theory to account for the quality of the bishops in Ireland. He was quite convinced, he said, that the English Government always appointed wise, honourable, and good men. But they never arrived. So, the Dean suggested, during their journey to Ireland these good and wise men were set on by highwaymen, killed, and their bodies hidden. The murderers then dressed themselves in their victims' clothing, came on to Ireland, and took the places of the dead men.

I venture to commend this theory, with modifications, to the Christians of to-day. It may help to account for much that must be puzzling them. They find their Fathers-in-God propounding theories which are not only at direct variance with what has previously been held to be true, but they do so in a way which suggests the falsity of the whole system of Christian theology. Take, as an illustration of this, a recent remark made by the Bishop of Lichfield. It was, indeed, he who brought Swift's theory to my mind. The Bishop is reported as saying:—

We Christians hold that civilization without God is like a powerfully engined ship with a maniac at the helm.

Now this is one of those artfully worded statements which, while ostensibly made in support of a specific belief, suggests the direct opposite. At first glance it looks as though the Bishop is saying that civilization is impossible without God. A deeper scrutiny suggests an opposite interpretation. He does not say that civilization is impossible without God, or that whatever civilization we have is due to divine guidance, or that civilization is part and parcel of God's plan. He suggests, under cover of defending religion, that civilization may be possible without God. Under cover of the expressed belief that we cannot do without God he hints that civilization may develop and be "powerfully engined" without him. Whether we choose to believe in God or not is of no

greater moment than whether we go from London to Glasgow by train or motor car. He does not say this in express terms, but he does suggest to his intelligent listeners—and even Bishops must run the risk of having such—"the thought" if civilization can occur without God, why bother about him at all?

* * *

Atheism in the Pulpit.

Now I am quite sure that no genuine believer would dream of making a statement of the kind made by the Bishop. It could only be made by a man who had made up his mind to make religion appear ridiculous to the keener-witted among his hearers, while not antagonizing the dull ones. A sincere Christian would surely argue that whether we believe in God or not, God is still there: and whether one can see God guiding the world or not, that guidance still exists. The Bishop of Lichfield, who is appointed to see that God gets first place in our thoughts, whose duty it is to see God's hand everywhere, actually invites people to believe that God can be put on one side if we care to do so. The ship of civilization will not sink, it will simply pursue a course different from that it would follow were God at the helm. As one professedly called to the task of preaching the greatness of God, the Bishop should know that it is his work to prove that the ship of civilization could never be afloat without God. Why, even a British Cabinet Minister never so far forgets his duty as not to assure the world that but for the example of Britain, and the moralizing influence of Britain, European civilization would crumble into dust. But the Bishop actually suggests that whether God is steering the ship of civilization or not depends upon whether we believe he is doing one or the other. If you believe he is there, he is there. If you do not believe he is there, then civilization goes its way without him. It is all a question of belief. Some of my readers may remember that in *Peter Pan* the fairies are brought back to life by the children affirming their belief in them. The Bishop suggests that the same principle applies to God. Disbelieve in God and he ceases to exist. God has no more an existence in nature than have Kings or Dukes. Like the fairies in *Peter Pan*, the gods exist only because we believe in them. God does not create man, it is man that creates God.

Now if this is not Atheism in disguise, what is it? It is the oldest of Atheistic theses. Never has the Atheist denied the existence of the belief in God: he has only claimed that the belief corresponded to no objective reality. The Atheist never said that people did not believe that civilization was dependent upon God, only that there was no evidence for the truth of such a belief, and argued that civilization could go on without it. The Bishop is suggesting Atheism under cover of preaching religion.

Showing their Hand,

The Bishop of Lichfield is not the only one, who under guise of advocating religion is encouraging the "cute" ones to reject it. There is the row now going on with regard to a book intended as an outline of current scientific thought, but which leaves out God. Those who are protesting against the book make it clear—too clear—that in their opinion the question of whether people are religious when they grow up depends upon whether they are inoculated with it while they are young. During the war it was discovered that what went under the name of shell-shock was not *caused* by the war. The war was only the occasion for the open manifestation of an injury done in very much earlier years. So these men say to the dull, "In the interests of the children they must be brought up religiously." And to the more alert they say, with a closing of the left eyelid, if we want the children to believe in us when they grow up, we must inoculate them now, before they can resist what we are doing. Then in after years when the occasion arises the operation performed in early years will make itself manifest, and we shall have regular for church-goers, those who but for our action would never go to church at all. To cite Josh Billings, it is a case of:—

Thrice-armed is he that hath his quarrel just,
But four-times he that gets his blow in fust.

Put in plain English, what these wolves in sheeps' clothing are saying is this:—

If you do not believe in a God when you are young there is little chance of your believing in one when you grow up? If you do not have a definite belief in a God, you will at least go round looking for one, and just as there is a chance for a quack so long as a man goes round hunting a cure for a disease he hasn't got, so there is chance for the Church if a man will hunger for a non-existent deity. Unless we can capture the children they will grow up enjoying life and never discovering they cannot be happy without God; they will be decent citizens without thanking God for their being such, and they will arrive at an understanding of the world without believing they cannot do so without God.

* * *

A Stab in the Dark.

This trick of suggesting unbelief under the guise of preaching religion is a very old one. It was done in the seventeenth century in England by Cudworth writing a refutation of Atheism, while actually presenting Atheism in a very strong form, and in France by Father Simon introducing Spinoza's criticism of the Pentateuch under cover of demolishing it. In the eighteenth century Bishop Butler criticized deism in such a way as to lead men to Atheism. In our own day Bishop Barnes fulminates against the fundamentalists, and all the time makes intelligent Christians wonder what will be left of Christianity if the miraculous is eliminated, and also ask what is the point in eliminating miracles from Lourdes, except to suggest the absurdity of all miracles? Eliminate the miraculous from Christianity and you may have something left just as you will have something left when your old saucepan is riddled with holes. It may make a good strainer but its days as a saucepan are numbered. When the criticisms of Dr. Barnes have been properly applied to Christianity there may be something left; but it will resemble the original as the strainer resembles the saucepan.

We have to-day at work a dual process. Many of those outside the churches simply ignore God in their work. Many of those inside make statements that breed doubt in the minds of believers. These preachers make religion ridiculous when they should make it impressive. By itself, ignoring God would

lead to the disappearance of religion by a process of atrophy. For gods can never stand neglect. While they receive praise, incense, attention, they flourish. But when their temples are neglected, when their service is ignored, when the incense is no longer burned and when the tribute is no longer paid, the gods wither like a plant deprived of air and light. In the past ignoring the gods has proved fatal to many thousands of them; it can have no other effect on the comparatively few that remain.

I think Swift's theory is the only one that fits the situation. There must be a limit to human folly, even in the Christian pulpit: and short of assuming the downright idiocy of the preacher, the only way of treating his intelligence with respect is to assume his aim to be that of steadily undermining the religion of the faithful without running risks himself. Whether the fools or the intelligent win he will be on the safe side. But I am quite certain that none but a God who was in the last stages of senile decay would call such men to his service. Moscow may have called them, and perhaps they may be the emissaries of some Atheistic organization, but they are not the stuff of which the men were made who built Christianity. These men revelled in superstition and gloried in absurdity. To believe that God is right when you know he is wrong, to believe in the reasonableness of demonstrated absurdity, to believe in the omnipotence of God when you see all sorts of people thwarting his alleged will, to see divine thoughtfulness in an earthquake and almighty benevolence in an epidemic, these are the things that built up Christianity and created the truly Christian type of mind. But to encourage men to reason about their faith is to take the first steps that lead to complete unbelief. In a civilized society religion may be healthy and wholly absurd. But using logic in religion in order to counter disbelief is like drug-taking to ward off an incurable disease. The doses have to be steadily increased. And in the end the disease conquers.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

How Bibles are Faked

"Ah, what a dusty answer gets the soul
When hot for certainties in this our life."
Geo. Meredith.

"In religion,
What damned error, but some sober brow
Will bless it, and approve it with a text."
Shakespeare.

SOME years ago the then Lord Chamberlain, the Court official whose duty it is to see that the British theatre is devoted to the high and ennobling traditions of legs and tomfoolery, banned the title of "Mecca" for a play. According to this high official the name of the Mohammedan holy city was far too sacred to form the title of a theatrical production in England. Strangely enough, the word "Mecca" was then, and is still allowed as the name of such holy things as boot-polishes, tooth-powders, cigarettes, and restaurants. And, yet more strange, a theatrical show with the self-same title, "Mecca," ran in the United States for nearly three years. No one was murdered, nor was anyone struck by lightning by an offended Allah.

This grandmotherly action of a former Lord Chamberlain was done to curry favour with the Mohammedans in the British Empire. Only a mere handful of Englishmen know anything, or care a straw, concerning Oriental faiths. The majority, when they read at all, prefer the recondite works of Edgar Wallace and Ethel Dell to such light literature as the Koran or the Zend Avesta. Indeed, if anyone mentioned these sacred scriptures, the average man would imagine that one was referring to the names of racchorses.

Yet, the fact remains that Mohammedanism is Christianity's greatest religious rival, and the Koran is one of the most widely read books in existence. Moslems number some two hundred and thirty millions, who use the Koran for public worship, and in schools more than Christians use their Bible. The various sects of Protestants of the world number only one hundred and fifty millions, whilst the Roman Catholics do not encourage undue familiarity with the Bible among the laity. The ecclesiastics of the Greek Church are in the happy position of catering for people who are far more interested in life than in literature. The Moslems are as fanatical as they are pious. They really regard the Koran as the actual "Word of God" as revealed to their own prophet, Mohammed. So profound is their reverence for the sacred volume that they may not even touch it without ceremony.

This Koran is a curious volume, and if the arguments advanced for the divine inspiration of the Christian Bible are worth a solitary bean, the Koran must be inspired also. There is the same apparent incompatibility of the author with the writing, a borrowed mythology and morality as impressive, the same beauty of language and wealth of Oriental imagery, the same claim to prophecy and the alleged fulfilment of prophecy.

Mohammed was a middle-aged man when he compiled the Koran, but Joe Smith was a mere youth when he wrote *The Book of Mormon*. Both the American and the Arab, however, lifted a large portion of their inspired message from existing scriptures. Mohammed annexed a large number of Hebrew legends, and Joe Smith adopted the style and phraseology of the Christian Bible. These things can be proved beyond the shadow of a doubt. So far as the Koran is concerned, the reverence for such names as Abraham, Lot, Noah, Moses, Solomon, and company, show the indebtedness to Hebrew Mythology. Mohammedan theology, however, is monotheistic. It is simplicity itself compared with the maze of the Christian creeds, and the tangle of the Trinity, which makes Christianity a thinly-veiled polytheism.

But for the battle of Tours, which rolled back the victorious Mohammedans, near a thousand years ago, the Koran would now be expounded in all the churches, and in the schools and Universities of this country. Messrs. Smith, Brown, Jones, and Robinson would be professedly Mohammedan. Presumably, they would be teetotallers, and possess four wives apiece, which would be good for the drapers, but bad for the brewers, who would not grace the House of Lords.

The Christian Churches have always been green with jealousy concerning Mohammedans. The history of the eight Crusades shows some of the extent of that envy, and also prove that Christian love is the merest hypocrisy and lip-service. The Papacy pitted the Cross against the Crescent, and staked the authenticity of each on the result. Had not the defeat of Islam resulted, a predominant part of the world might have become Moslem.

It was a choice of evils. A triumphant Islam would have brought in its train polygamy and a worse slavery than we possess. As it was, the victory of Christianity covered Europe with monasteries and nunneries, and an immense army of priests who batten upon the unfortunate people, and assumed the prerogative of royalty itself. It was the glare of the fires of the auto-da-fe which called attention to the worst features of this so-called religion of love. Fanatisms are now dying down.

Our remote ancestors seemed never to tire of making gods. They worshipped the sun and the moon, cats and crocodiles, and creations resembling dolls and

pantomime big-heads. If they were alive in England to-day they would start deifying the London General Omnibus Company, the Metropolitan Water Board, and the Croydon Airways. Yet, when the present-day men and women treat the curate with respect, or take off their hats to the bishop, they are but perpetuating the ignorance of other days, and paying homage to the dead past.

Consider for a moment how the more that theology alters, the more it is the same. Mormonism is the baby amongst religions, but Joe Smith "pinched" his ideas from the Christian Bible. Mohamet gutted the Hebrew mythology as material for his own Koran. The compilers of the Christian Gospels rung the changes up on the miracles of the Old Testament. And the Jews, in their turn, were vastly indebted to Babylon and Egypt. No wonder men call Egypt the motherland of Superstition. And, what is more important, in the alleged sepulchre of the Carpenter of Nazareth, the Christian world now guards its last divinity.

When we reflect on the present condition of priest-ridden Ireland, Spain, Portugal, and Italy, when we think of the struggle of reason and superstition, written in blood and fire during the centuries, it enables us to understand the magnitude of this battle for Freedom. Two thousand years ago, Lucretius declared the great curse of human nature was religion, which priests still use to fool and degrade mankind. In those far-off days, each, as it were, armed with simple weapons, fought together. Now, Free-thought, armed with far more formidable weapons, marches to battle in the confident hope of ultimate victory. For, in the last analysis, priests are but racketeers, and a blot on the body politic.

MIMNERMUS.

The Ages of Faith.

(Concluded from page 667.)

ONE of the claims made for Christianity, and made with the utmost confidence, as if there could be no dispute about it, is the claim that it improved the condition of the poor, the labouring, and the under dog. The truth is that they were never worse off than they were during the Middle Ages, when Christianity was at the height of its power, and there was none to dispute its supreme authority. Canon MacCulloch, in his chapter on "The Goliards"—wandering students and scholars, who travelled from city to city, in search of knowledge—observes that the Goliards despised the layman, as a brute "deaf and dumb to knowledge." And continues:—

More especially did they despise the rustics, the serfs—a contempt which was general among medieval churchmen. A *fabliau* [a tale, or story] says that God created three classes of men—nobles, churchmen, and *vileins* or serfs, the last being condemned to work for the first and second. Another *fabliau*, more sympathetic, describes how the soul of a dead vilen was taken by neither angel or devil. However, he reached Paradise, where he was refused admittance by St. Peter, though he disconcerted him and other Apostles by telling them how they had denied and disbelieved Christ and persecuted Christians, which he had never done. Finally God is called to drive him off. But he cries, "Judge me. You caused me to be born in misery. I supported my troubles without complaint. I was told to believe the Gospel, and I did believe. I shared bread and fire with the poor. In sickness I confessed and received the sacraments. I ought to gain Paradise, and anyhow I am in it, because you have called me, and here I shall stay." This is probably the only example of sympathy toward serfs in medieval litera-

ture until the time of *Piers the Plowman*. Rutebeuf, in one of his poems, shows that Paradise is not for serfs, and that Hell was made for them. If they no longer go there, it is because one of them was so obnoxious to Satan. They are driven from Paradise and from Hell. "I ask you, where shall these wretches go?" (Canon MacCulloch. *Medieval Faith and Fable*. p. 272.)

The Serfs—who did all the hard work and supported the upper classes—were regarded much as the "untouchables" of India are regarded by the higher castes. They were even considered too repulsive for Satan to admit them to Hell, let alone fit for Paradise. The story cited, is the single instance, known to the Canon, of any sympathy shown to serfs in the whole of medieval history until the time of *Piers the Plowman*, that is, in the fourteenth century; when the night of the Dark Ages was coming to an end, under the illumination of the Renaissance; and the strangle hold of the Church began to relax. Our godly labour leaders would do well to bear this fact in mind before giving vent to their sickening pious rhetoric.

The last chapter, appropriately, is devoted to "The end of the World." There has been much dispute concerning the views held by the Church, and the people in general, during the tenth century, as to the approaching end of the world in the year one thousand. Mosheim, for instance, the ecclesiastical historian, says that this belief: "spread all over Europe, and excited great terror and alarm among the people . . . Satan would be let loose, Antichrist would appear and the end of the world would come. Hence immense numbers transferring their property to the churches and monasteries, left all and proceeded to Palestine, where they supposed Christ would descend from heaven to judge the world." To this it has been objected that there is no reference to the matter in the Papal Bulls and acts of councils, and other official documents of the tenth century. Canon MacCulloch, dealing with this point, observes:—

These expectations increased during the century of darkness and barbarism, the tenth; and though the extent of the terror may have been exaggerated, yet it was widely believed that the year 1000, or, more exactly, 1033, would inaugurate the end. The latter year completed a thousand years of the Church's life. While it is true that every time of distress in the Middle Ages seemed to herald the end, and that in documents where one would expect it—in Papal Bulls and acts of councils—there is no reference to the expectation of the end in either of these years, this was at least one of the periods when that expectation was rife. (p. 288.)

The Canon also observes: "A tenth-century hymn contains the words. 'Veniet, prope est, dies iræ supremæ.' [The great day of Wrath is at hand] and at the beginning of charters and donations to monasteries the phrase 'the end of the world is drawing near,' was commonly used." (p. 289.)

The fact is, the belief was in the background of men's minds all the time, during all the centuries, and: "Whenever wars, famines, plagues, earthquakes, no less than human crimes, abounded, men saw in these signs of the end . . . The distress and terror of the Lombard invasions in Italy, the desolation following on wars and invasions in France and Britain, heightened this belief. The world was dying, passing away, falling to pieces; the last days had come: these phrases occur repeatedly in sixth-century writers." (p. 288.)

And again: "When the year 1000 was passed men were just as ready to believe that the end was near whenever distresses quickened their terrors." (p. 289.) Our author points out that there were constant

references, to the approaching end of the world, during the eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries, and gives many examples.

The Chapter on Relics, gives a vivid idea of the depths into which the intellect of man had descended, under Christianity. From early times an exaggerated respect was paid to any object associated with a martyr, or a saint. This veneration of relics reached astounding proportions later on. Relics of the Old Testament Patriarchs were common from the fourth century:—

Their graves and places associated with them were shown—for example, the rock smitten by Moses, Elijah's cave, the place where David composed the Psalms. Other relics were Moses' rod and horns, hairs of Noah's beard, pieces of the Ark, soot from the furnace of the Three Children, manna, Job's dung-heap, feathers from St. Michael's wings, St. Joseph's breath, our Lord's tears, sweat, blood, even the *praepitium* Christ, the rejected cornerstone wood from the tabernacles which St. Peter proposed to make. Christ's tooth, fallen from Him at the age of nine, was at the monastery of Saint Médard, Soissons; its imposture was denounced by Guibert in the twelfth century. The *praepitium* was possessed by several churches before the thirteenth century, when Innocent III. said, regarding such reduplicated relics, that it was better to leave the problem to the knowledge of God than to decide rashly. (p. 142.)

The translation of these relics, enclosed in costly wrappings, or receptacles, was attended with enormous enthusiasm, in which people were often crushed to death. Inventories of medieval churches and monasteries show the great number of relics that they possessed:—

In Sor the Abbot Angibbert enumerates the relics in his monastery. They included wood of the Cross, our Lord's vestment, sandals, crib, and sponge, water of the Jordan, part of a stone on which Christ sat, wood of the three tabernacles, hair from St. Peter's beard, and the Virgin's milk, hair and garment. Many churches in the twelfth century had more than five hundred relics. In that century there were some eight hundred monasteries in Germany and over ten thousand churches. Each had many relics, and the total must have been enormous. (p. 144.)

Such was the shocking state of mental degradation to which religion had reduced the people. How was it possible for any progress to be made, while men's minds were concentrated upon such puerile imbecilities as these. How different to the old Roman and Greek ideals!

W. MANN.

"Baptism Unnecessary."

A SON has been born in London to Mrs. Pitt-Rivers, wife of Captain George Henry Lane Fox Pitt-Rivers, scientist, writer and lecturer.

The announcement of the birth adds, "There will be no baptism."

Mrs. Pitt-Rivers is a daughter of the late Brigadier General the Hon. Anthony Henley and the Hon. Mrs. Henley. She is Captain Pitt-River's second wife. When she married him at Prince's Row Register Office last October she defied superstition by wearing green.

Captain Pitt-Rivers told the *Evening Standard*: "My wife is a woman of science, and, like myself, does not believe in baptising a child into any one religion."

"Most religions of the world have some form of ceremony in which a child is named. But I am a Voltairean, and I do not believe any ceremony is necessary. We shall call our son George Anthony."

From the *Evening Standard*.

¹ Mosheim: *Ecclesiastical History*. p. 340. (Ed. 1860.)

The "Persecution" of Religion in Russia.

BEFORE dealing with the official documents, the translator would like here to draw the attention of readers to the following item from the English press of August 24, 1932, contained in a telegram from Canora (Sask) Canada.

A parade by a large number of naked Doukhobors (members of the fanatical Russian sect of "Sons of Freedom," near Kamsack last Sunday, resulted in a number of them, both men and women, being tried here to-day on charges of parading in the nude.

Twelve men were sentenced to three years penal servitude, while six others were sentenced to lesser terms. One woman and two girls were given short terms of imprisonment, while nine married women were released after spending two days in gaol. In all thirty-one women and eighteen men were tried, first offenders being dismissed with a warning.

Where then were the protests from the clergy? The religious world knows quite well that the Doukhobors left Tzarist Russia to seek freedom in Canada. Where were the protests against the persecution of religion?

However, to our muttoms. What are the laws of the Soviet Union regarding the Freedom of Belief? On the 21st of January, 1928, the Soviet Government published a "Decree concerning the separation of religion from the State apparatus and the secularizing of teaching in State schools." Here are some chief points from the Decree:—

1. The Church institution is separated from the State.
2. It is forbidden within the limits of the Republic to effect rules or laws which will limit the freedom of belief or which will set up privileges or advantages for any particular creed.
3. Every citizen has the right to believe any religion or not to believe, all rights attached to any religion or to non-belief are left undisturbed.
5. Freedom to carry out religious services and rites is guaranteed in so far as they do not disturb public order, and are not accompanied by attempts to destroy the rights of the citizens of the republic.

The above cited points of the Decree are quite clear that, separating the State and Church, the Soviet Government granted full liberty of belief, and at the same time guaranteed full religious freedom as regards which religion shall be chosen (remember in England the English Church still claims all). The Decree forbids the publishing of any rules which would interfere with the liberty of belief. This actual freedom of belief is not to be found in even one capitalist State. We remember the laws against Blasphemy in England, Germany, Poland and America (U.S.A.). We remember the law cases during the last years in many European countries against Atheists, cases arranged under the guise of prosecutions against "Blasphemy," and also the case of Darwinism in U.S.A. (the famous "Monkey Case.")

Are the latter not prosecutions of the freedom of belief? Why do not the persons who protested so loudly against the persecutions so-called against freedom of belief in U.S.S.R. protest against the laws of the many European countries where the statutes carry laws against Atheism, that is, against freedom of belief?

Why do they not protest against the State giving certain privileges to one part of the inhabitants—the believers—and the other part none, leaving it in an inferior position in that particular? For example, compelling the non-believer to pay religious taxes, thus breaking the freedom of belief, and in many ways bringing religion into the schools, and making Concordats with the Church? The Soviet State gives full liberty to believe any God or to believe in none. The fourth point of the Soviet Constitution reads: To guarantee full freedom of belief to the workers the Church is separated from the State and the schools from the Church, and freedom of religion and anti-religious propaganda is guaranteed to all citizens. During the Czarist regime the Orthodox Church enjoyed a privileged position, and the other sects tolerated, but the Atheists persecuted. In the capitalist countries Atheism is at the present time being persecuted. The Soviet State guarantees to

all believers, just the same to non-believers, freedom of belief. The Soviet Constitution guarantees freedom of the "call" to any religion to all believers. Only the Soviet State gives the believers peaceful tenure of their religion. Remember under the ancient regime that Czardom tolerated but persecuted many of the non-orthodox sects, for instance, those who refused to bear arms on account of their religious tenets. The Soviet State frees these people from compulsory military service, but demands instead a labour service. Is this "persecution of religion?" The religious sects themselves have abused the privileges in the past in regard to freedom from military service, while at the same time members of the same sects (Baptists and Evangelists for example) in other countries were actively working to organize war against the Soviet State, and often actually took part in the bearing of arms during the Intervention. Despite that, however, exemption from military service is still given, and the leaders of the Baptists could say at their 26th All-Russia Congress that, "Our membership has lately grown by the addition of many unregenerated (baptized) men and women attracted by the fame of the Baptists having freedom from military service." (See Minutes of the 26th Baptist Congress, published by the Federated Union of Baptists of U.S.S.R., 1927, p. 105) In other countries the Baptists take up arms. Is that not a refutation of lies that religion is persecuted? Let the other countries look to the mote in their own eye first.

The leaders of the Orthodox Church in U.S.S.R., in a statement concerning the situation made on the 15th February, 1930, to representatives of the foreign newspapers said:

The persecutions, or pressure put on believers and priests, are caused not on account of religious beliefs, but according to the application of the general laws just in the same way and for the same reasons as to other citizens, that is, for anti-governmental acts. One must admit, that in the past the Church has been too much allied with the monarchist regime (which is well known) and so now the religious section cannot correctly understand the whole value of the great change that has been brought about, and for some time conducted itself as an open enemy of the Soviets. The better thinkers in the Church, for example, Patriarch Tikhon, well understand this and tried to correct the past incidents, advising his people not to go against the popular will, but to support the Soviets. Unfortunately, several yet cannot see that the old is gone never to return, and so they conduct themselves as political enemies of the Soviet State.

It is especially at the moment of greatest struggle to build up the Socialist State that one needs the creation of religious fables of "persecution" of religion to support the anti-Soviet campaigns. And within U.S.S.R. itself, many religious bodies and persons are carrying on an active campaign among the people against the new ideas, and in districts where the collective farms are being formed, such things as, "All who join the Collective are acting as if they crucified Christ," are being preached. In other places active opposition takes the form of influencing the wives of the villagers against the new ideas. In the Ural district, for example, the priests have been caught threatening to refuse to baptize the infants if the villagers took part in the Collective farming, and even refusing burial and declaring the villagers so taking part boycotted. (It is rather humorous to hear of the clergy declaring a boycott to us non-believers, but serious to the simple believers; translator). And in the case of failure by simple means, such things as "miracles" are made to happen.

In regard to the five-day week system, it is natural that the religious element should be antagonistic, and declare it a "matter of the anti-Christ." It is obvious that where economic and political propaganda is carried on against the Soviet State, it can be helped by the cloak of religion and thus have a better chance to be supported by a certain section of the workers (more especially in the villages).

The famous Roman Catholic worker in U.S.S.R. named N. Tolstoy, who spent thirty-six years in the priesthood, declared in a letter published by him in February, 1929 (papers of Kharkov Town) to explain the reasons of this abdication from the priesthood:

"The Roman Catholic priesthood personifies the whole

bitter hate of the capitalist West against the power of the workers, and instead of Christian love and toleration, this priesthood constantly occupies itself with anti-Soviet agitation and work, teaching the believers the same ideas."

And so, not wishing to take part in this work, he left the Church. So much for the punishment of believers. In a final article we will outline the position of the Freethinker organizations in regard to the State and some opinions of the Clergy in U.S.S.R. regarding the situation of their own organizations.

Englished by I. CORINNA.

Acid Drops.

The recent discussion on Church and State in the *Times* included a letter from a correspondent who had the hardihood to affirm openly that disestablishment would deprive the parson of his national status. The writer did not put it so, but said the parson serves, as his duty, not only churchpeople, but all the parishioners. In legal theory he does; but in fact he long since ceased to function. As a matter of fact it is mostly on quasi-legal occasions that non-churchgoing parishioners require him, and it is precisely on these occasions that he has received recent and episcopal permission to refuse to act. Thus the only theoretical case that can be made for them has been rejected by the clergy themselves. All they want to retain is the social and financial benefit of establishment. Their duty to the State has already gone by the board.

In the year 1931, 7,000 people were killed, and 193,000 injured on the roads. The civilization we have is not the production of Freethought; the slogan of "getting on" is peculiarly Christian, and it can be nicely squared with all the clutchings and clawings after wealth, and the now somewhat tattered doctrine of mansions in the skies. Skill and courage in the world of ideas was never more needed than now, and in this respect, organized Christianity has seen to it, that what does not suit its book can be quietly suffocated.

A good example of Christian love and brotherhood may be found in the refusal of the Vicar of Rye Harbour to bury the bodies of two human beings. From the newspaper report, the problem was of such immensity that it involved the views of an Archdeacon and a Bishop as well as of the Vicar. We feel sure that on this basis, there must inevitably be class distinction in heaven, which may explain why so many sensible people tell Christianity's representatives that they may stick their religion on the shelf.

A move at the expense of all who have wireless licences is to be made towards rationalized religion. Commencing on the first and third Sundays of the month next year, there will be half-hour talks on the broader aspects of religion. The Archbishop of Canterbury will lead off and later the Archbishop of York will speak. Sweet are the uses of advertisement—and this is all done to meet the innate religious feelings of society about which we are told by the professional purveyors of the cure for sin.

According to the B.B.C. a very large number of wireless listeners enjoy listening to the religious items. If that be true, we wonder how the B.B.C. explains certain statements by the Rev. Dr. E. J. B. Girtlan. The worthy doctor says he wants to bring home to the people of his church "the terrible fact" that "nine out of ten people in this land to-day never enter a church, and in many cases are definitely antagonistic to the Gospel." He adds that "if they [the good saints of his Church] go into the public parks and open spaces and try to gather a crowd of the indifferent and hostile, they will find it almost impossible." From this it would seem that the B.B.C. is not receiving reliable information as regards the total

amount of religiosity existing among its customers. Or it may be that the B.B.C. is not giving accurate information as regards this matter.

In regard to marriages in Methodist Churches, an official of that denomination has addressed an enquiry to the Registrar-General regarding the entry in the Marriage Register, where it states that marriages take place according to the rites and ceremonies of . . . The reply is that:—

The question of the rites and ceremonies used at any wedding is not one upon which the Registrar-General is required to issue instructions, but is entirely a matter of arrangement between the parties and authorities of the building in which the marriage is solemnized . . . the Registrar-General is of opinion that any marriages approved by the new body would be correctly described in the Marriage Registers as according to the rites and ceremonies of the "Methodist Church."

This is but another way of saying that the particular religious mumbo-jumbo which may be attached to the legal formalities is no concern of the State, and is of no legal importance as regards making the marriage contract binding. It also serves as a reminder that a church and a parson are, in the eyes of the Law, no more than a registry office and a registrar.

Property now owned by the new Methodist Church is, we learn, estimated as worth about £70,000,000. One may assume that a large proportion of it escapes paying rates. Now, here is a great opportunity for Methodists to achieve a truly Christ-like action. Let them offer to pay rates on all their un-rated "sacred" property, and refuse to take advantage of the unfair privilege of exemption which ecclesiastical property now enjoys. That would lighten the financial burden of rate-payers everywhere, and deeply impress the "outsider" as to the superiority of Methodism over all other Christian denominations. Moreover, so noble a gesture might have far-reaching results. It might shame all the rest of the Churches into making a similar Christ-like move.

A pretty distinction was made by the Bishop of Bangor in a reference at his Diocesan Conference to proposed inter-communion between Anglicans and Dissenters. The admission of dissenters to "our altars" (*i.e.*, as communicants) might be "not intolerable"; that Anglicans should communicate at "their tables" was not to be thought of. Also that men who were neither bishops, priests or deacons, should celebrate at "our altars for our people" could never be allowed. The Jews and the Samaritans were real pally compared to his lordship and his dissenting "brethren." But perhaps he does not recognize the relationship—close as it is.

In an interview with *The Christian* the garrulous secretary of the Lord's Day Observance Society says that his Society opposes "the secularization of the Lord's Day for the one supreme reason that God Almighty ordained it, and that disobedience to His commands will certainly bring upon the nation His righteous judgments." The "one supreme reason," and its accompanying threat, are unlikely to impress or frighten even a reader of *The Christian*, so Mr. Martin goes on to say, "there are other arguments which even non-Christians should be able to appreciate. Thus the I.D.O.S. had actually had a letter of thanks from the Parliamentary Committee of the Hairdressers Association in connexion with an Act passed a year ago, which secures a day of rest to 31,000 hairdressers and barbers." If the I.D.O.S. got this done, why do the Hairdressers need a Parliamentary Committee? Mr. Martin lets out another secret. After saying that "fresh legislation is a clamant need," he adds, "when not one person in four in this Christian land attends the House of God there is surely need for some clarion call to be sounded forth." So we must have "fresh legislation" to interfere with the liberty of more than three out of four of the population. We hope, if any such legislation is mooted, these figures will be borne in mind.

Referring to the "condescension" of Christ, the Rev. Dr. MacDuff observes that "if condescension be a relative term, and increases in proportion to the distance and disparity between him who exercises it and those who are its objects, where can there be condescension comparable to this?" According to the dictionaries "condescension" is "affability to inferiors," or a "patronizing manner". We should have hesitated to apply these qualities to one generally described as "meek and lowly"; but lexicography is a science little valued by theologians, and we often notice that parsons rush in where sceptics fear to tread when mere matters of language is concerned.

The *Universe* reports that a Catholic lady was married in the bridal dress made for her sister upon the occasion of the latter's "profession" as a nun. Now the same material is to be made into vestments for the brother of these ladies, a priest. No mention is made of the nun's hair, which is usually shorn on "profession"; but doubtless it will not be used for any material purpose or gain. It may find a seemly utility incorporated in a hair shirt.

A writer in the *Christian World* protests against "muffled Christianity." (The phrase is borrowed from a character in one of Mr. Wells' novels). Muffled Christianity is thus defined: "vague sentiments about the higher life, amiable notions concerning the finer feelings, and a good-hearted belief in anything and everybody." Here, says the writer, "all the harsher aspects of the gospel are toned down." Perhaps if they were not toned down Christianity would be not muffled but suffocated.

Of Dr. French Oliver, an evangelist in Bristol, it is reported that "his mastery of scientific subjects as he conclusively proved the veracity of Holy Writ amazed his hearers." We don't wonder.

"How common and vulgar Sabbathless people usually become," exclaims a preacher. Like the Pharisees of old, he seems to be congratulating God for making him superior to other people. And no doubt he uplifted his congregation to the same spiritual level.

A well-known journalist says that Nonconformist ministers have changed since he was a boy. He adds:—
Then, from to-day's standpoint, they were narrow. To-day, their tolerance is taking an interest in a score of things that their forebears viewed with narrow minds.

He might as well have hazarded a guess as to the cause of the improvement. What is pretty obvious is that their religion was not responsible. They have become less narrow-minded despite their religion. They have acquired a little tolerance and broadmindedness through the criticism and example of people outside the Nonconformist sects. There is still plenty of room for improvement. And there is a possibility of improvement, so long as the ministers are brought into contact with the modern "pagan" environment, with its bias towards tolerance and broadmindedness.

The new Act regarding Sunday entertainments does everything possible to encourage Sabbatarian bigotry, and is the essence of one of the most retrogressive measures of recent years. We are glad to see that the Stockport Branch is circularizing candidates for the municipal elections soliciting their attitude on the question of Sunday games, etc. We commend this action to other Branches, for unless determined action is taken the position under the new Act will be much worse than it has been hitherto.

So after all, that gay and gallant "spirit" photographer, Mr. John Myers, after producing some marvellous "spirit" extras of Edgar Wallace, Lord Balfour, Sir A. C. Doyle and others, has, like so many of his predecessors, come a nasty cropper in this unbelieving world of sceptics.

The Marquess of Donegal was by no means satisfied with the test to which he put Mr. Myers, and which he referred to last week, especially when he found that the "extras" were mere reproductions of what are known as half-tone blocks. A magnifying glass revealed the dot screen used by newspapers in reproducing photographs on the "spirits," and so another "test" was asked for and accepted.

Unfortunately for Mr. Myers, Lord Donegal had none of that infantile credulity in spiritualism which distinguishes such eminent people as Messrs. Hannen Swaffer, Shaw Desmond, Will Goldston and others, and the result was a complete fiasco. The plates to be used were marked, and every precaution possible was taken to prevent the slides being changed. The spirits turned up on plates not marked, and Mr. John Myers, very angry indeed, smashed all the negatives taken.

Mr. Myers swore most solemnly he had not been guilty of fraud, and Mr. Will Goldston said "The whole thing has come as a shock to me. I cannot understand it." What we cannot understand is anybody being taken in by "spirit" photography. It is, in the whole sorry business of spiritualism, sheer fraud of the worst kind. There never has been a genuine "spirit" photograph taken and there never will be.

The *Daily Herald* strongly supports Mr. Lansbury's appeal to the Churches to join in "the war against poverty." How can they do that? Clergymen and ministers can, perhaps, like Parson Adams, "throw a suitable dash or two into their sermons," while, like that Erastian cleric, they take care to say nothing that is disagreeable to Sir Thomas and other honest gentlemen, their neighbours." They will "rally their forces" to defend their common means of livelihood, and to slander and malign those who expose their pretensions and the futility of their faith. Danger is the only thing that will bring together what the recruiting officer described as "Church of England, Roman Catholics and fancy religions of every variety." They will bring "pressure on the Government" when it proposes to cut their claws in the realms of education or established priorities, and most Governments have surrendered to that pressure. The *Daily Herald* thinks the Church cannot divorce itself "from efforts to lift up the poor and give them opportunities to live useful lives." It forgets that poverty, while it may be inconsistent with Socialist principles, is raised to the elevation of "heroic sanctity" in the Christian religion. If the Church makes war on poverty it makes war on its principles—and, incidentally, on its opportunities.

The Bishop of Gloucester wants to know whether Methodist reunion is "a step towards a greater Christian unity," or whether it is designed for "the more effective organization of schism"? :—

Says the Bishop: "We all must unite,
It does us much harm when we fight,
But 'tis obvious," adds he,
"That to get unity
All the rest must admit *we* are right."

The 250th Anniversary of William Penn's voyage to America has been the theme of much relevant and some un candid comment. The first year he landed in the new State a law was passed making "worldly amusements" punishable offences. He lived to see his "holy experiment,"—that is to enforce a narrow code of restrictions based on religious principles—a failure. It is to his credit that he wished to do better than the Puritans whose intolerance—to Quakers in particular—proved that, as a not unfriendly historian says, "it was not in search of liberty that they had crossed the ocean."

The alleged parsimony of the Scot is the butt of many vulgar, and, we believe, mendacious wits. The National Bible Society of Scotland, notwithstanding "many difficulties," has arranged for a large distribution of "Scrip-

tures" in remote villages—in Spain! "Scriptures" (*i.e.*, single books of the Bible), cost less than the whole book, no doubt; but we are sure that the "many difficulties" were not pecuniary ones. Pious generosity and native caution are here seen in pleasant combination.

The all-absorbing question as to what is precisely the value of "a Communion Service celebrated by a minister not episcopally ordained," is one which surely ought to be tackled and settled once for all in these happy times of economic distress. The *Church Times* thinks "it is not a Eucharist at all, or it is impossible to say whether it is or not, a Eucharist, because ministered by one improperly authorized." We agree to the lot though it is only fair to say that the mumbo-jumbo of any priest or minister leaves us quite cold and does not seem to affect the Holy Wafer either. But considering that we have had nearly 2,000 years of true Christianity (somewhere) and that 872,639 books have been written so far on the question, we are a little puzzled why there should be any discussion at all on the matter. Surely the Holy Ghost can be finally appealed to?

Another pretty little discussion which is worrying Anglo-Catholics and Modernists is exactly what can be omitted in belief and faith by anyone calling himself a Christian. The Anglos believe everything. They swallow the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection and the whole of the miracles as easily as we do oysters. The Modernists prefer to throw off almost everything except the Perfectly Unique Figure of Christ (whatever that is.) Dr. Major has been explaining this logical position to the readers of the *Church Times*, which, however much it disagrees with him, is glad some remnant of the Original Faith remains. "We regret immensely," it says, "if the Modernist has lost his faith in Gospel facts, but we are infinitely glad he still retains, for the time being, a faith in Evangelical ideas." What a happy family of united Christians we are!

We get shocks everytime we look into a real orthodox religious paper. Our latest comes from a gentleman named the Rev. W. J. Simpson, who actually believes in angels! The difficulty of knowing to what the wings are attached to or where they buy their harps and trumpets, to say nothing of dresses specially made to allow the wings free movement, does not worry him in the least. Christ believed in angels, so what matters the horrid unbelief of mere sceptics? "Belief in angels," he tells us, "can never be ignored without departure from what Christ himself taught, and without serious loss of far-reaching and inspiring thoughts about heavenly ministrations." Who can withstand that touching appeal?

A sidesman in a West Country Church was taking up the collection at the morning service when a well-dressed lady in one pew passed the bag without contributing and whispered, "I shall be here this evening." In the evening the same lady (in another pew) again omitted to pay, and whispered "I was here this morning." And, no doubt, according to "moral" theology, she told no lie!

Various opinions are held, says the *Church of England Newspaper* as to whether "the parish priest should dabble in the ministry of healing." Its advice is that "the average priest will be well advised to let it alone when it comes to complicated cases." We should have thought they were precisely the cases in which "the ministry of healing" might prove its metal. Anyway our contemporary is candid in admitting that when it comes to healing the priest is at best a "dabbler."

After describing the terrible results of a hurricane at Abaco, a missionary ends on the following note:—

On Sunday, in the grounds of the Mission House, a service of thanksgiving was held. It was touching to see so

many, who had lost practically all, join in this service thanking God that life was still theirs.

It certainly was a "touching" sight to see the survivors expressing their gratitude to God for being only half-killed instead of wholly-killed by him. The attitude and gratitude of a Christian towards his God has a remarkable likeness to flunkeyism.

A London paper has been telling those parsons who organize "stunts" in order to attract clients, that "stunting" is merely a revelation of the instinct for self-advertisement; and also that the churches cannot hope to compete, as a form of entertainment, with the usual forms of entertainment. Perhaps so; nevertheless, one should give the "stunt" parsons credit for knowing the kind of intelligence they wish to attract and to which the doctrines of Christianity are likely to appeal. After all, the kind of intelligence which is attracted by a "stunt" ought to have a natural affinity for the kind of religion that Christianity is.

The citizens of Croydon will no doubt duly appreciate the broadmindedness of their bishop, who headed a deputation supporting Sunday cinemas. The bishop appears to have concluded that, as Sunday cinemas could not be prevented in Croydon, the best move would be to support them, and then to get himself made chairman of a committee to dictate the kind of entertainment to be permitted. By this means, something might be done in the way of "safeguarding" the parsonic industry—in the name of saving the "soul" of the citizens.

The celebration of the incorporation of Isleworth, Heston, and Hounslow into one new borough had to be done properly and reverently. Hence, the ceremony included a parade of some soldiers armed with rifles and a bishop to "bless" the Charter. As this is a Christian country, a show of militarism and religion in civic ceremony is only natural. Presumably, the one could hardly be invited without the other, as the two have been such close chums during many past Christian centuries. Nevertheless, we venture to suggest that the new borough would have made a better start if it had excluded from its first ceremony both those vestiges of an earlier civilization. A bishop's "blessing," we are glad to say, will not make either the Charter or the borough any worse. The harm, however, that it will do is in leading unthinking citizens to believe that, somehow or other, the borough will be made better thereby. The "spiritual home" of "blessing" ceremonies is Central Africa, and not modern England.

No doubt the readers of a certain Nonconformist paper were immensely pleased when they were told that there has been successful experiments in "Combating Atheism in Battersea." It appears that the Rev. A. J. Thompson recently gave an address, at his chapel (in Queen's Road, Battersea) on "Would it matter if England followed Russia and closed the churches?" Needless to say, this defender of the faith successfully established—to his own satisfaction—his contention that "it would matter." The following is a specimen of his "challenging statements": "There are men in Battersea who go off for the week-end and leave their business in the care of the police and the parsons. If there were no Church, some of them would have to live nearer their business." We presume he meant that if the churches were closed and the parsons became unemployed, the property of the week-ending business-men wouldn't be safe! After the address, Mr. Thompson, standing out of the pulpit, called for questions. Curiously enough, the report gives nothing which would suggest that some real Atheists were present and asked real Atheistic questions. The questions reported, or hinted at, were merely such as the ordinary newspaper readers would ask—the kind of person who is ignorant both as regards religion and Atheism. Mr. Thompson hardly shines as a slayer of Atheists or Atheism.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MAURICE FIELD.—Will you please send address to which the books are to be sent. It was omitted from your letter.

F.P. (Woolwich) asks "does the Bible forbid a joke." Ephesians iv. puts "jesting" in the same category with "filthiness and foolish talking."

T. OWEN.—A new Clergy Discipline Act would be rather awkward. Quite a regiment of judges would be required to administer it.

F. H. DEAN.—Next week. Sorry no space in this issue.

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. Rosetti, 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.

The Chorlton Town Hall was crowded at both meetings on Sunday last to listen to two lectures from Mr. Cohen. One very striking feature of the two meetings was the number of young men—and women—who were present and who followed the address with evident keenness and appreciation. This is one of the most hopeful signs of our movement. There were also visitors present from Worksop, Nottingham, Barnsley, Bradford and other districts. There was, we believe, also a good sale of literature. Mr. E. Monks occupied the chair at both meetings. An endeavour will be made to secure a larger hall on Mr. Cohen's next visit to Manchester.

To-day (October 23) Mr. Cohen will deliver two lectures in the Central Hall, Hillgate, Stockport. In the afternoon, at 3.0, his subject will be "The Present Position of Religion and Science," and in the evening, at 7.0, "The Making of Mass Opinion." Admission is free. Tea will be provided for those coming from a distance. Good audiences are anticipated.

A Branch of the N.S.S. has been formed at Blackburn, and all local saints who have not yet joined are invited to attend the meetings which are held every Sunday evening at 36 Oswald Street, Blackburn. The local secretary, Mr. A. Leacy, 67 Shorrock Lane, Blackburn will be pleased to receive applications for membership forms, or details concerning the Branch.

The South London Branch N.S.S. has secured the New Morris Hall, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham, S.W.4, and a course of Sunday evening lectures up till March has been

arranged. The syllabus is varied, and should provide some very pleasant evenings. Copies may be obtained from the local secretary, Mr. J. Seabert, 18 Gairlock Road, Camberwell, London, S.E.5, who will also be pleased to forward details of membership in the Branch.

Mr. H. Holt writes: "The general excellence of the *Freethinker* and Mr. Cohen's articles in particular calls for some appreciation. I enclose 30s. to cover twelve months subscription of the paper to the following"—the "following" are two addresses to which the paper is to be sent. We are pleased to find the paper receive so practical a mark of appreciation.

Now this is an example that might well be imitated by at least a thousand of our readers. We get scores of letters from old and new readers expressing high appreciation of the *Freethinker*, and we should like the example of Mr. Holt to be generously followed. In these times a paper such as the *Freethinker* is not maintained without a very severe struggle, and the state of trade has not made the task of maintenance easier. There must be thousands of potential readers of the paper in the country, and as advertising is beyond our resources, we suggest that a comparatively inexpensive way of gaining new readers would be for those sufficiently interested to take at least one extra copy per week and see that a likely subscriber gets it. That would be their contribution to the maintenance of a journal that has never made a profit in the whole of its fifty-one years' existence, and so long as it remains as fearless and as outspoken as it has always been is never likely to do so.

The Mysterious Universe.

THE wonders of infinite space
The problem of cosmical truth,
The mystery that scientists face,
Of t'atom's interior—forsooth!

For Spinoza, Descartes and Kant,
With their dry metaphysical lore,
My soul doesn't flutter a pant;
In fact, metaphysic's a bore.

And whether the wills of mankind
Are "determined" like puppets on strings,
And whether its "matter" or "mind"
That is first in the order of things:

What are these in philosophy's quest
Compared with the reason why God
In his infinite wisdom thought best
To create common people?—It's odd!

When trains vomit unpleasant "leaven,"
And "masses" upon us are hurled
Can God really be in his Heaven
And is it "all's right with the world?"

MONTY.

From the "New Leader."

Time moves on the same, whatever disparity there may be in our mode of keeping count of it, like true fame in spite of the cavils and contradictions of critics.

W. Hazlitt.

Self-confidence is the first requisite to great undertakings.—Johnson.

The Sage of Ferney.

No author in modern Europe has ever displayed greater activity than Voltaire. When we reflect on the unresting life led by this amazing man his literary output appears prodigious. Seventy volumes stand to his credit. No mere arm-chair philosopher, he mingled in the busy world of men, and the detailed knowledge he acquired regarding things in general is truly stupendous. Voltaire continues to rank as one of the supreme masters of French, while his wit and wisdom still retain their original power.

Contemporary critics accuse the great master of wild exaggeration, and more than hint at the superficial character of many of his opinions. Voltaire's poems and plays are now seldom acted or read, although *Candide* still ranks as one of the keenest and most brilliant satires in literature.

The tyrannies of Church and State were anathema to Voltaire. A born humanist, he was ever eager to espouse the cause of the suffering and oppressed. He hated persecution with a bitterness aroused and sustained by his sense of its unspeakable enormity. When Voltaire vindicated the memory of Calas, and avenged the wrongs inflicted on Servin, persecution, in the language of Lecky, seemed to the minds of all intelligent men not merely "criminal but loathsome." And, true it is that the spirit of persecution has ever since striven to disguise itself under other names.

A modern critic, Prof. J. B. Black, while fully admitting Voltaire's supremacy as a writer and controversialist, nevertheless suggests that his mind was too partisan to permit that calm and judicial survey so essential to the man of science. Still, Prof. Black grants that Voltaire "was the greatest publicist of his day, flitting like a stormy petrel across the billows of European politics, now in the light, now in the shade, tendering advice to monarchs, exposing political and social injustices, or defending the cause of hapless victims of tyranny, like the family of Jean Calas. Indeed, it would be no exaggeration to say that, in the scale of values, he placed life above literature, action above contemplation, and right conduct above philosophy. Writing, to him, was merely a means to an end, a vehicle by which his consuming passion for justice might be carried across the footlights, converted into motives for action, and transmuted into deeds."

Voltaire's long life extended from 1694 to 1778. His father was a notary, while his mother was related to the aristocracy. Her society connexions introduced Voltaire, whose real name was Arouet, into influential circles. In his tenth year, the sceptical Abbé de Châteauneuf instructed the boy in letters and Deism. Later, at the Jesuit College of Louis the Grand, Voltaire received a sound education. There, the Jesuits maintained the Renaissance custom of utilizing the schools for dramatic representations, and this probably originated Voltaire's life-long devotion to the theatre.

Voltaire's ability as a versifier was early manifested, and while quite a boy he became a greatly admired member of a brilliant literary group. Voltaire's father viewed these proceedings with misgiving, but his mind was relieved when Voltaire joined the diplomatic service. Then some escapade caused the youthful poet to be sent home in disgrace. He then entered a lawyer's office, where he did anything but study law. Young Arouet's passion for satire now brought him into general notice. He was suspected as the writer of a lampoon on the Regent and he was banished from Paris. A subsequent satire led to eleven months' detention in the Bastille, where he revised an early

work, commenced the *Henriade*, and determined to assume the name of Voltaire.

Voltaire was now a prominent figure in intellectual circles. An early play was received with enthusiasm when performed in Paris. But succeeding dramas were less appreciated. He completed the *Henriade* wherein Henry of Navarre was portrayed as the hero. The glorification of a Protestant Prince, an eloquent plea for toleration, joined to derogatory references to the Papacy, alarmed the authorities, and sanction for publication was withheld. But the undaunted author contrived to obtain surreptitious publication in Rouen, and the printed poem was smuggled into Paris, where it was widely read and intensely admired. Voltaire's standing seemed assured, but envious and malicious enemies were plotting his downfall.

In 1725 Voltaire was publicly insulted by the Chevalier de Rohan, who was duly paid back in his own coin. When dining at the Hotel Sully Voltaire was called out and soundly beaten by the Chevalier's lackeys, their master looking on. Voltaire appealed in vain for justice, and at last challenged Rohan to fight. The offer was accepted, but on the morning arranged for the duel Voltaire was arrested and imprisoned in the Bastille once more. He was set at liberty within a fortnight and then departed for England.

Voltaire's visit to England proved one of the greatest events in his career. The marked differences of French and English life impressed him deeply. A patient and painstaking observer, Voltaire's genius was stirred in no ordinary degree. His youthful literary productions were comparatively trifling, but when he returned to France he had become one of the leading representatives of European letters. Versatility incarnate, he now discoursed on all sorts of subjects in a manner so striking and attractive that his fame was permanently established throughout the lettered world.

Also, during his three years' residence in England, Voltaire had amassed sufficient money to make him independent of great men's patronizing favours. George II. ascended the English throne shortly after Voltaire's arrival, and his consort, Queen Caroline, was a genuine admirer of literary ability. Society welcomed a scurvily treated exile from an unfriendly land. For, as such, France was then regarded, and statesmen and men of letters emulated Queen Caroline in their attitude towards the stranger. Bolingbroke, who had known Voltaire in France, had returned to England and introduced him to Pope and his circle. Peterborough, Chesterfield, Congreve, Walpole, Thomson, Gay, and the dashing Duchess of Marlborough were also numbered among Voltaire's many admirers.

Keenly alive to the importance of royal patronage, Voltaire dedicated an English rendering of his *Henriade* to the Queen, and this publication produced what was then a very substantial sum of money. He visited France under an alias from time to time, until, at last a full licence for his return was granted in 1729.

Voltaire's shameless satire on Joan of Arc—*La Pucelle*—was now begun. His brilliant *Charles XII.* appeared at this time, as also his justly famous *Lettres sur les Anglais*. He adopted every conceivable precaution when preparing these works for the press, as he had no desire to wound the susceptibilities of the censorship. Still, *Charles XII.* was produced surreptitiously in Rouen.

The Letters on the English saw the light in 1733. The work proved a panegyric of everything English, particularly in matters of political and religious freedom. The liberties of England stand in glaring contrast with the tyrannies of France. The implications

proved so obvious that the enraged authorities ordered the seizure and destruction of the pestilent book. A warrant was issued against the author and his house was searched. But, before the blow fell, Voltaire had disappeared from France and was already safely domiciled with Madame du Châtelet in the independent Duchy of Lorraine.

Voltaire's residence at the Court of Frederick the Great has been the theme of many malicious pens. But, despite its unlucky termination, Voltaire's intimacy with Frederick proved fruitful, and the philosopher's influence was mainly responsible for the fact that Frederick, Catherine the Great, and Joseph II. of Austria abolished torture throughout their dominions.

At the height of his fame Voltaire settled in Ferney, a border territory, from which, in any emergency, he could conveniently escape into several adjoining jurisdictions. Ferney became a shrine visited by all the leading men of the age. A wealthy man, Voltaire entertained lavishly, led the life of a country gentleman, reclaimed barren soil, bred horses and poultry, and founded a watch-making industry which he fostered by his recommendations among all his influential friends from crowned heads to his business acquaintances.

The execution of Calas, a Protestant falsely charged with the murder of his son who desired to return to Catholicism, fired Voltaire with burning indignation, and he never rested until the sentence had been annulled, and the remaining members of the Calas family restored to liberty. This, and other successful efforts on behalf of innocent victims of Catholic intolerance, procured Voltaire the gratitude of crowds of his countrymen, and, ever since, the admiration of the intellectual and moral world.

The varied activity of his declining years was prodigious. In addition to his multitudinous public activities, he composed, while domiciled in Switzerland his *Peter the Great*, *Louis XV.*, the *Philosophical Dictionary*, as well as a host of minor productions. His letters were legion and included many missives to the Empress Catherine, while he resumed friendly relations with Frederick by means of correspondence.

After an absence of thirty-four years, Voltaire revisited Paris where he was accorded more than a royal reception. He was acclaimed by all that was socially and intellectually eminent in France. Multitudes in the streets applauded him as the saviour of Calas or, at least, as the vindicator of his memory. The staging of his play *Irene* at the Comédie Française proved a magnificent success. Voltaire was the idol of the hour, but at the age of eighty-four the strain was great and his frail frame broke down. Death approached, and shortly before the end two priests entered the dying man's chamber, but from their professional ministrations he turned away and only answered, "Let me die in peace."

The great liberator died in the night of May 30, 1778. A marvellous many-sided humanist had passed away, but his memory will remain immortal while civilization and culture endure.

T. F. PALMER.

Revolution is only evolution in a hurry, but revolution in too great a hurry may cover itself with ridicule.

(The late) W. L. George.

The god of science is truth, its church reason, and its service evidence.—H. J. Massingham.

What is the end of fame? 'Tis but to fill a certain portion of uncertain paper.—Byron.

The Coward's Castle.

THE Edinburgh police have been attending their annual church service in St. Giles Cathedral. One does not know if attendance at such a service is compulsory or not. But no doubt the ordinary constable whatever the regulations, and whatever his views of religion and matters ecclesiastical, finds it desirable from his personal point of view to "follow the band"; as many soldiers and sailors do who have no connexion with any religious body.

But what the writer wishes to direct attention to more particularly at this time is the snobbery shown by the minister who preached the sermon. In the course of it, he said that policemen could not many of them hope to be brilliant or influential; but they could always be "plodding and faithful" to duty. It was by the exhibition of these qualities that they retained the confidence of the public generally.

One could hardly cite a more glaring example of the topsy-turvydom of public life than this particular utterance. Here we have (as usual) the useless parasite with a gift of the gab lecturing the useful worker. Apparently the reverend gentlemen failed to keep in mind instances of ordinary policemen, railway porters, navvies and scavengers who are artists, authors and poets, but who would as soon think of getting on their hind legs to tell other people how they ought to live, as they would think of standing on their heads on top of the dome of St. Giles.

Edinburgh is, of course, the citadel of Scottish Presbyterianism; but one must suppose that there are police constables in the Edinburgh force who are *not* Presbyterians.—Evidently therefore the proper course would be if special services for policemen continue to be considered necessary, to have clergymen representing other denominations officiating at these.

It is a punishable offence in Scotland to interrupt an established church minister in the course of his sermon; but this does not apply to other sects. However, an interruption of any preacher in any church is almost unheard of, though the Unitarian Ministers invite questions and remarks from their audiences. The trinitarians of the National Church are, of course, encased in triple brass, so he would be a bold person who sought to interrupt them. There are few successors of Jenny Geddes.

It is pre-eminently a clerical characteristic that the priest or parson loves to hear the sound of his own rhodomantade. And when he knows that officially he is permitted to say what he chooses and revile and vilify any class he chooses, he often betrays his bigotry and spleen. The younger citizens of Edinburgh cannot realize what clerical bigotry of sixty years since was like. Those were the bad old days when Gilfillan was drummed out of the U.P. Church because he declared that he could not reconcile the Fatherhood of God with the doctrine of everlasting punishment; when organs in church—or "kist o' whistles" were productions of the devil, and when "whistling" or reading a secular book, paper or magazine on the Sabbath day were mortal sins. Sunday buses, trams, and conveyances of all kinds were officially damned. Nowadays the fashionable cleric motors to church; while his humbler brother takes a tramcar, thereby no doubt increasing the work of the police and requiring more of the members of the force to be on point duty.

We have not yet in Edinburgh any immediate prospect of all Museums, Public Reading Rooms, and Recreation Parks being opened on Sundays; but we are moving nevertheless. The Scottish National Portrait Gallery and Museum is now open to the public on Sundays; the Railway Companies have many cheap

excursions from Edinburgh on Sundays; charabanc tours and private motor runs to the country districts are now common from Edinburgh on Sundays; and the extensive Tram Car Service is now as much used in Edinburgh on Sundays as on week days. Indeed during the summer months perhaps more so. We are now waiting for some valiant spirit in the Town Council to demand the opening of all Museums, Reading Rooms, Bowling Greens and Tennis Courts on the Sunday. Thousands of workers would thereby be greatly benefited physically, intellectually and morally. This is the most effective means too of laying siege to the Coward's Castle!

The police is now a *profession*—the members of which render highly useful public service. It has plodded on faithfully from humble beginnings to high efficiency, even brilliance and influence. And in conversation with an intelligent constable, soldier, sailor or labourer, whom you know intimately, you will get more enlightened and more substantial instruction about life and humanity than you will get from any bible-puncher. Is priestly arrogance dead? It is not.

IGNORUS.

Religion and Happiness.

It has often been a source of great wonder to me, that of all kinds and conditions of people, the most miserable *looking* are those who frequent Churches and Chapels and Salvation Army Halls. This is of course a very general statement, and can in no wise be applied strictly to each and every individual Church and Chapel-goer. Go to any Church or Chapel, and you will find that for every nine or ten typical Church people present, perhaps one, but only one, will look really happy.

I have said you will find one in every ten. By that statement one might imagine that of say, four hundred people present at a service in Westminster Abbey, three hundred would look thoroughly miserable. I do not mean that at all. As a matter of fact, the very circumstances of these people (in being in Westminster Abbey, in being among fine people, in listening to fine music); the very circumstances I say would serve to make them look, well—at least satisfied. No, I was speaking more particularly of the people who go to the smaller Churches in and around London.

Now it is fairly obvious that only a certain *kind* of Christian would trouble to go to these Churches (these Churches so out of the way, so nearly forgotten, and of so little use) and this certain kind of Christian is the *elderly* Christian. Now should anyone suggest here that I am in error, I would state definitely two things:—

- (1) That of five Churches I visited on Sunday Evenings the congregation in each case amounted to from fifteen to thirty people.
- (2) That of these thirty people, but four or five were young people.

It is of these elderly people whom I speak when I assert that they look unhappy. And seeing that:—

- (a) Elderly people constitute 75% of the Church-going Christians:
- (b) Quite 50% of these are old ladies:
- (c) A good 35% of these old ladies are old maids (and the happiness of *normal* old maids is proverbial!
- (d) Finally 20% of the younger people (of whom we have estimated 25%) are what I would call below normal standards;

what wonder that I and others are convinced of their unhappiness? Unless (and I am open to correction) their happiness is of the bovine variety, stolid and grim.

Now all this leads me to believe that this great Christian Church has precisely the same effect upon its members as all religions have always done, viz., crushing any spark of individuality which its members might possess. I do not mean "crushing" in the sense of persecuting them; just "crushing" in with-holding from them wholesome knowledge.

Confront me with any Christian to-day, and if you tell me his sect, I know his every argument. If I hear a preacher announce for his text the expediency of one of the institutions of his Church, do I not know beforehand that he will not use, indeed cannot use, any new or intelligent argument? Do I not know that, with all his ostentatious pretension of examining and criticizing the grounds of the institution, he will do no such thing? Has he not pledged himself to look at but one side—the permitted side? This conformity makes them false and unreliable in all particulars. And the reason for this? Cowardice? Hardly; say bovine stupidity.

Religion everywhere, anywhere, all the time, and for all time, is a conspiracy against the manhood and individualism of mankind. It is a society in which all members sacrifice their liberty, their conscience, their culture, and their vitality, for the better securing of a happy life after death. The virtue in most demand is not goodness but conformity; the greatest sin, Individualism. It has nothing to do with Fact, Truth or Science; its life is bound up in names and customs. Could we but tell men that they are not leaning willows depending on this and depending on that; that with the exercise of self-dependence they will get new power, that a man is a man; that he should be ashamed of compassion, that the moment he acts for himself, tossing all books, idolatries and superstitions aside, we shall no longer pity him, but thank him!

But about happiness. A Christian might argue that the appearance of these people is deceptive, that no matter how miserable and unhappy they may look, they are, in reality the happiest of mortals. But that argument will avail them nothing. If I am happy and contented I am indeed a strange creature if I walk about with a long, sad face. And in the same way if those poor Church-goers are as happy as they would have us believe, then I cannot for the life of me understand their happiness or envy their lot; for if their happiness is such that it makes them look sour (and in looking sour themselves, people who have the misfortune to look at them become sour) I can well do without that kind of happiness. That they are unhappy should occasion no surprise.

They are not allowed to think, for fear of eternal damnation; and should they make known any private opinion—well, the scourge of an angry world to-day is every bit as uncomfortable as the crude methods of the displeased world of an earlier day. Among our forefathers King Olaf converted Eyvind to Christianity by putting a pan of burning coals on his belly. To-day it is done by ostracism.

We know full well that they would have us believe that this religion is a religion of love; that revenge, obedience, and punishment are but words; that the good old blood-curdling formula "Blood and Fire" is but a formula: but how much of this is true? "For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God . . ." Do we need any further proof that their religion is anything but love? I think not.

But fear is a coat of mail. It is to be cased off, not ripped off. We do what we can by teaching, and endeavouring to show them the errors of their beliefs, but so far from being thanked for our pains we are shunned as though we were the minions of the very devil himself. They regard us, do these good Christians, as so many hardened criminals, fearing neither God nor man (the "not fearing God" frightening them most of all) intent upon enjoying our lives at any cost.

And it is partly because they envy us our happiness that they are so willing to condemn us. Way back of their minds they have ideas which, allowed to develop, would bring them by the thousand to our standards of Freethought. But no sooner do these ideas germinate than the startled possessor rushes off to the confessional for deliverance from his heretical thoughts. Now what religion is this which so chains the intellect? It is an unmanly religion, and something should be done to explain to these people, who have not the power to buy the prayers of the multitude, that the hypocritical leaders of the Church are no other than tyrants. It was Brougham, who, in a speech in the House of Commons on the Irish elective franchise said: "How will the rev-

erend bishops of the other house be able to express their due abhorrence of the crime of perjury, who solemnly declare in the presence of God, that when they are called upon to accept a living of £4,000 a year, at that very moment, they are moved by the Holy Ghost to accept the office and administration thereof, and for no other reason whatever?"

We are told that because it is our nature to abhor change in all things and in religion in particular, we are given to cant. We are. What is more flagitious than the sanctimony of the press?

Religion to-day is like one vast theatre. The leading actors get the fattest salaries; the thunder and lightning is supplied by us (Freethinkers and all who upset their peace); the play is a mixture of tragedy and hypocrisy, comedy and fanaticism.

One would think that these facts would serve to convince the most bigotted Christian of the falsity and shallowness of the Church. Perhaps they would. But how to get these and other statements into the hands of these poor people? The priests have their organized crowds of hangers-on and informers who smell out everything disrespectful to the Church and before an honest leaflet has time to do its work, it is destroyed.

But need we worry? I think not. And I will finish this article with a quotation from one of the world's most powerful thinkers.

"There will be a new Church founded on moral science, at first cold and naked, a babe in the manger again, the algebra and mathematics of ethical law, the Church of men to come, without shaums or psaltery or sackbut; but it will have heaven and earth for its beams and rafters; science for symbol and illustration: it will fast enough gather beauty."

CHARLES G. MOTT.

"Powder and Shot"

THE *Daily Herald* on September 17, was indiscreet enough to print the views of a man who did not go to church but who, nevertheless, was not irreligious. Labour's (sic) *Daily* made amends, however, on the following Friday by permitting the Rev. Desmond Morse-Boycott to blow the ram's horn in praise of Orthodoxy. His article was adorned with illustration by way of a mob of kneeling men and women, and numberless children with outstretched arms, praying to the youthful Christ, suspended, with illuminations, in mid-air to compete with the light of Dawn. Besides being pictorially inaccurate, since most people are abed at dawn (if, indeed, they are not working) it bore the unproved caption "God has implanted the worship-faculty into Man's being." Amidst the plethora of nonsense which composed the article there appeared the following striking admission:—

"Mr. Beckles wants Christ without dogma. He would know no Christ but for a dogmatic Church. He believes in *His Divinity*. He would never have heard of it had not a dogmatic Church, which wrote the New Testament, preached it down the ages."

Maybe the reverend gentleman is unaware that Freethinkers have been saying much the same thing for donkey's years. Of course Mr. Beckles would not be hankering after Christ, with or without dogma, any more than he hankers after leprosy, if it had not been for the kind offices, in his early years, of the dogmatic Church which Morse-Boycott advertises.

A recent report in the *Universe* (September 16, 1932) illustrates just how early the dogmas of Christianity are implanted in the minds of the young and the effect. It seems that a three-year-old boy fell into a well three feet deep at Abercynon, and after he scrambled out, pitched a fine tale to his mother and a priest, saying that it was "Our Lady pulled me out . . . The Lady of my medal."

We would think the child a peculiarly gifted romancer or in need of the skilled services of the mental specialist if it were not for two things. Firstly, the jargon which he uses to describe the incident indicates how assiduously the Christian ideology has been pumped into him before he was scarcely emerged from his cradle. Secondly the way in which the story is presented by the *Universe* obviously invites its Catholic readers to exercise their

credulity by this instance of a modern miracle at the Welsh Lourdes.

Gerald O'Shea, the boy in question, has been caught young enough that he may never know just how much his knowledge of "Our Lady" is due to the dogmatic Church.

From Catholic sources in America it is gathered that "There are now 10,576 Catholic schools of various classes in this country . . . They have between them 2,679,000 students . . . All the Catholic schools . . . will be staffed this year with a total of 89,865 instructors." (*The Universe*, September 9, 1932).

Catholic teachers from all parts of the world have assembled in congress here as a prelude to the re-formation of the World Association of Catholic Teachers, which fell into abeyance during the Great War. Catholic teachers' organizations in fourteen different countries have already expressed their desire to enter the association. More than 200,000 individual teachers are supporting the movement." (*The Universe* September 3, 1932.)

It has been apparent for many years that the Roman Catholic Hierarchy was seeking to hold back the rising tide of radicalism among the masses by all the means in its power. The Catholics have hoped to suppress knowledge by the Index Expurgatorius. They have tried to arrest the "leakage" from the Church with social amenities to keep young people anchored in religion. To an even greater extent, however, they have tried to "educate" the faithful in dogmas which are opposed to reason. Propagating a social policy to increase the fecundity of Catholic parents the Hierarchy has strained every fibre to promote the building of schools to house the resulting offspring.

America is a country where most creeds, both antique and ultra-modern, flourish. The influx of Irish immigrants has provided a suitable basis on which to build and consolidate the most formidable of them all.

The fact that there is now a World Association of Catholic Teachers means that there will be periodic meetings, not so much to discuss, whether sand and rocking horses are suitable instruments for instruction in Infants' schools, but as to how their united efforts can fasten the yoke of Catholicism more firmly on the necks of the schoolchildren. Their task will be to model an international education policy to advance Catholicism. After common agreement has been reached they will disperse to their various countries to impede there the progressiveness of the national education machine. We can expect in England a more intensified application of the underground methods by which Catholic schools have been fostered for the last fifty years, with the consequent encroachment on the efficiency of the national education system which sectarian strife has always entailed.

It will be recalled that the right of asylum, which it was once England's boast existed in this country, has long since been called in question. Trotsky, Henri Barbusse, and the Spanish airmen, who were responsible for the abortive revolt against the monarchy, are among the more notable persons who have been turned from these shores. Who knows how many hundreds of lesser known but enthusiastic anti-clericals have been forbidden entry?

It reflects little credit upon the administrators in England, especially when they extend hospitality to such persons as ex-King Alfonso, who does not look kindly, to say the least, on the valiant attempts of the Spanish Government to break down tyranny in a priest-ridden country.

To-day we find that the Jesuit emigrés are finding their way into Belgium, and many even have crossed to England. Other Orders are establishing communities here, and we read that at Ivybridge, Devon, there is a Spanish community of twenty-three members. This is only one instance among many where property has been purchased to house the dispossessed clericals from other lands. The Catholics obviously know that they are safe, and are likely to remain safe, in England, which is a country where toleration borders upon stupidity in allowing an intolerant clericalism to grow up unhindered.

News of this kind must have a sobering effect on those who recognize the additional danger to liberty inherent in such organizations, which range, with equal thoroughness, from the petty politics of the small rural parish to the deepest secret intrigues in national affairs.

The exaggerated nationalism which the Pope so much dislikes in European Countries—where Atheism makes most progress—is found to be congenial to him in Fascist Italy, where the Papal Legate has been pouring praise on the Duce and the Italian Fascist Government.

Those who remember the pugilistic outbursts of Mussolini and Italy's part in the "armaments race" will have no illusions as to what is behind the present friendly relations between Pope and Duce. Said the Papal Legate:

"The Fascist Government of Italy is the only exception to the political anarchy of governments, parliaments and schools the world over." (*Daily Herald*, September 15, 1932.) That means that the Pope is well satisfied with the education policy which Mussolini is carrying out.

Whilst some German Catholics want German priests to minister to German souls, we find that there are people in Britain who want British tombstones in British churchyards for British corpses. The Central Council for the Care of Churches has issued a pamphlet stating:—

"Nothing can be more unpatriotic or disloyal to the best traditions of the artistic sense of our country than the provision made by certain cemeteries for the use of these ugly foreign tombstones." (*Evening Standard*, October 4, 1932.)

This is a typically English sentiment worthy of a nationalistic institution like the Church of England. The same Council would be well occupied in indicting the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for possessing lucrative slum property on the grounds that they are "disloyal to the best traditions of the artistic sense of our country." They could make out a good case. But that is not anticipated. Still less can we expect to find that august body revolutionized to the extent that, where the matter of slums is concerned, there shall be applied the smallest modicum of the so-called "Christian principles."

G.F.G.

Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

CHRIST'S NEW MORALITY.

It is a pity that the protagonists in our national "Dailies" of the "Outline for Boys and Girls," compromised their case by an abortive appeal to the sentient souls who consider that Christ is all right, and Christianity all wrong. The only possible point of contact is, that in the Gospel Myths we have a figurehead purporting to popularise a New Morality for his day, as we are for ours.

But Christ has not married, and although he said that in his Father's house there were many mansions, he also asserted that there was no marriage. If the family is not necessary for the perfect State, there must, it would appear, be some sinister reason for the Bishops' concern as to its fate.

What an unifying spectacle for this "Twentieth Century" to find learned Bishops and Educators still playing the Church's age-old game of intellectual repression, by dogmatically appealing to the prejudices of those whose minds they stultify. If their flocks are mentally incapable of judging a presentation of the New Morality for themselves, that is little commendation of the institutions these men represent.

H. METCALF WOOD.

Argument for a week, laughter for a month, and a good jest for ever.—*Shakespeare*.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON.

INDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham, S.W.4, near Clapham North Station, Hall No. 5) : 7.30, Mr. E. C. Smith (Secretary London Peace Council)—"The Dangers of Dogma."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road) : 7.0, Sunday, October 23, Dr. C. W. Saleby—"Civilization and Self-Control."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1) : 11.0, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D. Lit.—"Obsolete Education."

STUDY CIRCLE (N.S.S. Office, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4) : 8.0, Monday, October 24, Mr. A. D. McLaren—"Some Common Fallacies."

THE CONWAY DISCUSSION CIRCLE (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.) : 7.0, Tuesday, October 25, Gerald Heard—"The Psychological Backing for Social Reform."

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (City of London Hotel, 107 York Road, Camden Road, N.) : 6.45, Mr. William Leavis—"Dora."

WEMBLEY AND DISTRICT BRANCH N.S.S. (Mitchell's Restaurant, 114 High Road, Wembley) : 7.30, Sunday, October 23. A Debate and Discussion—"That Modern Knowledge does not Invalidate Religious Belief." *Affir.*: Mr. H. C. Bunting. *Neg.*: Mr. J. P. Victor Morris.

OUTDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead) : 11.30, Sunday, October 23, Mr. L. Ebury. Monday, October 24, South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Mr. F. P. Corrigan. Thursday, October 27, Leighton Road, Kentish Town, 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park) : 12.0, Sunday, October 23, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. 3.30, Messrs. Bryant and A. D. Howell-Smith, B.A. 6.30, Messrs. Bryant, Tuson and Le Maine. Every Wednesday at 7.30, Messrs. Tuson and Le Maine. Every Friday, at 7.30, Messrs. Bryant and Le Maine. The *Freethinker* and other Pioneer Literature can be bought during and after our meetings of Mr. Dunn outside the Park in Bayswater Road.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Shakespeare Room, 174, Edmund Street, near Livery Street) : 7.0, Mr. A. D. McLaren—"A Freethinker Looks at the World."

CHESTER-LE-STREET BRANCH (New Rooms, Front Street) : 7.0, Sunday, October 23, A Lecture.

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Godwin Cafe, Godwin Street) : 7.30, Sunday, October 23, Rev. A. E. Hosier (Bradford)—"Convictions and Sympathies."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley) : 2.30, Sunday, October 23, Mr. Jack Clayton—"Faith Healing Fact and Fraud." Questions. Discussion. All welcome.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (City Hall, Albion Street, No. 2 Room) : 6.30, Sunday, October 23, Mr. P. Jolliffe—"What is Progress and Decay." Silver collection.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate) : 6.30, Sunday, October 23, Lord Snell—"The Changing Pattern of the World."

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Islington, entrance in Christian Street) : 7.0, Sunday, October 23, Dr. C. H. R. Carmichael—"The Test of Civilization." Reserved Seats 6d. *Freethinkers* on sale.

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Hall No. 5, Plymouth Chambers, Drake Circus) : 7.0, Sunday, October 23, Iconoclast—"Did the Universe have a Beginning."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Central Hall) : 7.0, Sunday, October 23, Mr. J. T. Brighton. Branch Meeting after Lecture.

STOCKPORT LABOUR FELLOWSHIP (Central Hall, Millgate, Stockport) : 3.0, Mr. Chapman Cohen (President National Secular Society and Editor of the *Freethinker*—"The Present Position of Religion and Science," and at 7.0, "The Making of Mass Opinion." Questions and Discussion.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Buildings, Green Street) : Sunday, October 23, Mr. F. Brown—"The Material Basis of Civilization."

OUTDOOR.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE BRANCH N.S.S. (Bigg Market) : 7.30, Friday, October 21, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE BRANCH N.S.S. (Bigg Market) : 7.15, Sunday, October 23, Mr. R. Atkinson.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Bigg Market) : 7.30, Tuesday, October 25, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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Secretary: R. H. ROSETTI.

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

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