

THE FREETHINKER

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Views and Opinions.

The B.B.C. and the Public.

ONCE again the question of the policy of the B.B.C. has been brought before the public, this time in a Parliamentary discussion on the question of appointing a committee to review the policy of the Corporation with regard to the broadcasting of controversial matters. For our own part it is all a matter of casting out Beelzebub by Beelzebub. Any committee that is appointed to determine what opinions should be broadcast must represent a censorship of opinion, and it is in this direction that the B.B.C. has been the greatest sinner. The B.B.C. has already an advisory committee—appointed by itself—to help it determine what may be “given the air,” and it surely does not materially alter the situation if the existing committee is abolished and another one established. It may satisfy some who are at present discontented, but it still retains the most objectionable feature, that of a censorship. It is not a more effective control of opinion that is needed, nor is there needed a committee which will see that certain recognized political groups are given equal opportunities to broadcast their views. It is the abolition of censorship that is necessary, not its regularization.

The day before the debate in Parliament the *Manchester Guardian* published a leading article dealing with the coming discussion. As was to be expected from a paper with the traditions of the *Guardian* the article was—for an English newspaper, very very liberal in tone. But there were exceptions and reservations. For example it said:—

On the broad issue of public policy it is plain that broadcasting deserves all the freedom that its listeners are willing to give it. Broadcasting is, or should be, a kind of national Hyde Park . . . Democracy is a method of government by discussion, contrasted with autocracy, which may be described as government by concussion . . . Naturally the rules that apply to the Hyde Park of fact must also apply to the wire-

less forum. Nothing may be transmitted over it which would cause a breach of the peace if said “outside.” At present it has been ruled—*no doubt wisely*—that some may not be heard on the wireless forum, *propagandists for rationalism, and the more extreme politicians.*

In reply to this article I wrote a letter to the *Guardian*, published in its issue for February 22, protesting against so curious an endorsement of a censorship, and asked that the B.B.C. should really be a kind of Hyde Park Forum, subject only to the embargo on clearly illegal matter, and there should be an “uncensored expression by responsible representatives of every form of opinion in both religion and politics.” To this the *Guardian*—evidently not quite easy as to its own attitude—replied with another leading article in the same issue in which my letter appeared. It expresses the belief that all points of view ought to be allowed,

but public opinion sets limits to the latitude of debate . . . There are many beliefs sincerely held by responsible persons which, as everyone knows are difficult of public discussion. As a State organization, and therefore responsible to the whole of the nation, the B.B.C. must take account of this. The immediate lessons of the discussion are that the B.B.C. should lead public opinion rather than follow it.

* * *

Liberty in Chains.

In both excerpts the italics are mine, and I think that reading them in connexion with the passage cited from my letter, the issue, the only real one, is fairly stated. And this issue is a very old one. It has been with us in Church and State throughout history, and is likely to be with us for a long time to come. Essentially it is a claim to freedom of opinion against the right to suppress or limit its expression. Personally I should have expected the *Guardian* to take the side of freedom, and it does, in spasms. It is quite reassuring to be told that the broadcasting monopoly, with its State-imposed tax charge, ought to be a kind of National Hyde Park in which all opinions that do not clearly lead to a breach of the peace should be heard; but it is disturbing to be told that broadcasting should be allowed only such freedom as its listeners are “willing to give it.” For that freedom has always existed. Belfast Orangemen have it in the Catholic quarters of the city, and Catholics have it in the Protestant quarters. It was present in the very darkest period of the dark ages, it is present in Fascist Italy and in Soviet Russia. The *Guardian* should make up its mind whether at any time public opinion is justified in setting limits to the latitude of debate or whether that public opinion which attempts to do so should be reprobated and checked in its activity. For it is obviously not all public opinion that wishes to set these limits. Some public opinion on every question must be on the other side or there could be no desire for debate. (I have

agreed, at least tentatively, that debates which inevitably lead to a breach of the peace may be regulated in order not to confuse the issue.) Public opinion is a very elastic and a not very illuminating phrase. In politics it means the opinion of the party to which I belong; in the yellow press it means the "stunt" which promises the largest circulation; in religion it means the Church to which I belong, everywhere it means *my side*, and everywhere it believes in the advisability of "setting limits to the latitude" claimed by the other side. There is no such thing as a unified public opinion, there are only a number of conflicting opinions held by the public. Any one of these may claim a majority in its support; but for those who believe in freedom of thought everyone of them has a clear right to expression, and to protection from the State in expressing itself.

If democracy is government by discussion, as contrasted with government by concussion, if we are to govern by thought instead of by bludgeons, how is the democracy to be kept sufficiently informed to carry out its functions profitably if that self-appointed body "public opinion" is to say what latitude it is "willing" to give to an opposite opinion? An informed mind must be cognisant of all opinions on the subject on which it is asked to decide, and how can that be done so long as any party, or an organization is given the power to place an embargo on any view which it decides is against "public opinion," or is outside the legitimate "latitude of debate?" The opinion that is not heard, because someone, some church, some State, or some corporation decides the public shall not hear it may be the very opinion people ought to hear—and endorse. There is no paper in the country that might be expected to recognize the truth of this more readily than the *Manchester Guardian*.

* * *

Religion and the B.B.C.

Now let me take the specific case of the B.B.C. I will do so in connexion with its treatment of religious questions as illustrating all that may be said, with some variation of terms and some differences of severity in the terms of indictment, with regard to other matters. The B.B.C. has been granted a monopoly by a government which at least professes to believe that in this country all opinions for and against religious beliefs are on an equality. The law holds this, and it will ensure the rights of the non-believer, so far as expression goes, so long as he is not so acting as to cause a breach of the peace. From the outset the B.B.C. decided—the *Guardian* thinks wisely—that it would permit nothing to be broadcast which was of a deliberately anti-Christian character. Not merely that, but ever since its establishment it has made continuous and enlarging encroachments on the time of the listener, and at the expense of all listeners, in the interests of a definite religion. In the course of a week it gives many hours to prayers, religious services and lectures in behalf of religion. And it permits no reply. More, it secures that not even by accident shall there be a direct attack upon the religious advocacy to which so much time has been given by imposing the dishonouring condition that speakers shall submit written speeches for revision by a completely irresponsible committee or official. If the B.B.C. had existed with full power centuries ago history might have been different from what it is. Galileo would never have been placed on trial, Bruno would never have been burned, Buffon would never have had to recant, Darwin would never have shocked public opinion. These men would have submitted their manuscripts to the censors and would have obediently preached or written after everything ob-

noxious to "public opinion" had been eliminated from their manuscripts.

Yet the *Guardian* seems to think that the B.B.C. has "wisely" banned "rationalists" (by which I presume it means Freethought propagandists), and extreme politicians from using the wireless. Its reason for this (what a rash thing it is to give reasons for an unreasonable position!) is that the B.B.C. should "lead public opinion," and that, "as a State organization it is responsible to the whole of the nation." The first is a very bad reason, the second is worse, it is *very* bad. On the first I would say with Mr. Churchill during the House of Commons debate:—

The well-meaning gentlemen of the British Broadcasting Corporation have absolutely no claim to represent public opinion. They have no right to say that they voice the opinions of English or British people.

They have no mandate from any section of the public to speak for anybody but themselves. The B.B.C. arrogates to itself a right which the general law of England has surrendered, that of suppressing forms of opinion which it decides it is not good for the public to hear.

What is meant by saying that the B.B.C. is responsible to the whole of the nation? The B.B.C. has never said so, and it does not act as though it is. There are millions of Freethinkers and non-Christians in the "whole of the nation." What representative Freethinker has ever been asked to give an address explaining to the public why he rejects Christianity? Hundreds of parsons have been asked to tell the world why they believe in Christianity, and the B.B.C. has stood guard against an exposure of their fallacies, their misrepresentations and their stupidities. Mind, I do not say that Freethinkers have not stood before the microphone, but they have not been permitted to criticize Christianity. Freethinkers could not be excluded because that would have obviously shut out some most striking names in science, literature and ethics. They have spoken—muzzled by the terms of their engagement. Thousands of letters of protest against the religious policy of the B.B.C. have been sent in. At least eighty per cent of the people who can reach the continent on Sunday do so to get away from the sermonizing and religious services of the B.B.C. Religion which vast numbers of people believe should be disestablished is re-entrenched in its privileges by the B.B.C.

I am not so sure that it is the function of the B.B.C. to lead public opinion, but in that case it does not do so, but follows it, so long as that opinion is "safe" and orthodox. The B.B.C. does not educate, it instructs, and there is no greater enemy to education than instruction.

* * *

A Policy of Suppression.

In pursuit of its policy the B.B.C. has been neither truthful nor honest. It commenced its religious work on Sunday in a very mild way, and asked for letters of approval to be sent. The clergy thankfully saw to it that these letters were forthcoming. Then when protests came against the religious services, lies were told of the number of the protests, and demands for something to be said on the other side were shelved by the plea that they could not have controversial matter. When this began to wear thin, even the religious heads were driven as a last resort to truthfulness by the plain statement that they would never permit anything of an anti-Christian character to be broadcast. And this is ensured by insisting upon speakers submitting their manuscripts for revision. And publicists in this country have so little sense of their own dignity that they agree to it.

There the matter stands for the present. But I hope that no Committee of the House of Commons will be appointed to control the broadcasting of opinion. I object to that kind of thing just as much from Parliament as from the B.B.C. And I hope to have the support of the *Manchester Guardian* in demanding that, so long as broadcasting is a monopoly, every opinion that is current in our land should be given an opportunity for expression, from Conservatism to Communism in politics, and from Atheism to the most objectionable form of religion. And I suggest that it may help to drive the B.B.C. into the path of intellectual honesty if public men will summon up enough courage to tell this self-appointed inquisition that they decline to submit written speeches before delivery so that the irresponsible committee of the B.B.C. may delete any opinion or any expression that may be obnoxious to some old lady down in Cornwall or some curate at Lambeth. If a man is representative enough to be asked to speak, his dignity and his sense of the decency of speech should be left in his own hands. The B.B.C. should be put in its place, and its proper place is certainly not that of categorically deciding what are the intellectual requirements of the British public, or defending the Christian religion from criticism. At that game the Catholic Church failed centuries ago, and Sir John Reith and his miscellaneous collection of parsons is hardly likely to succeed.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Sing a Song of Sixpence.

"Parting is such sweet sorrow."—*Shakespeare*.

"You do not believe, you only believe that you believe."—*Coleridge*.

"Liberty's chief foe is theology."—*Bradlaugh*.

"Solemnity is of the essence of imposition."
Shaftesbury.

The prevalent economic depression has affected the various religious bodies of this country. Not only are there fewer threepenny-bits in alms-bags, but the cheques from richer members of the flock are for smaller amounts than formerly. So far as the Free Churches are concerned, the outlook is far from pleasant. Some pastors have already sought fresh fields and pastures new, and forsaken the Lord's Vineyard for the more arduous, and more profitable, career of politics. Another result is that, as salaries shrink, there is greater reluctance among live men to enter the moribund clerical profession. The best men go into other businesses, and only the second-raters, and even twenty-second raters, care to join a sacred caste apart from their fellow citizens.

Even the State Church is affected adversely, and there is serious talk of cutting salaries. Not of the archbishops, bishops, canons, and higher clergy, but of the curates. This is the unkindest cut of all. Only a short time back, after years of agitation and unrest, the curates were granted salaries ranging from £230 to £250 annually. They had scarce begun to enjoy this increased stipend, they had but glimpsed the Promised Land, when retrenchment became the order of the day.

What will these poor curates do? Will they demonstrate at Hyde Park or Trafalgar Square with banners announcing that they are "Sons of God," and that they are starving? Will they select some leather-lunged members of the Church Army to air their grievances? Maybe they will employ a brass band to play, "There's a friend for little children above the bright blue sky." It is quite certain that they will employ secular, rather than sacred, methods.

Strictly speaking, these Sons of God should supplicate the Throne of Grace for help in their time of financial distress. Faith, they tell their congregations, can move mountains, why should it not soften the hard hearts of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners? Ravens brought food to the Old Testament prophet, there are ravens in the Zoological Gardens, and elsewhere. Manna fell on the Israelites of old, is it not possible that postal orders can fall on the curates of to-day? Why do not they trust to the one sure hope of prayer, rather than to the purely mundane methods of the ordinary unbeliever.

There are thousands of curates. Cannot the miracle of feeding five thousand be repeated for their special benefit? One paltry miracle should not be too much to expect for such a celestial gathering "on the rocks."

Miracles do not happen, and the curates will have to bedew their surplices with their tears. Miracles never have happened, and the clergy know it. The higher ecclesiastics sit tight on their money-bags, and smile at the innocence of laymen. These purse-proud prelates are not practising self-denial. That is for the simple folks in the pews. Whilst the endowments and the money last the bishops will share their quarter of a million of money annually, and accept the palaces, town houses, and anything else they can lay their hands on. The curates, being the underlings, may have to suffer. They may have to give up hope of marriage until times are better, and lead a celibate life.

After all, the "big eyes" of the poorer clergy is a quite natural phenomenon. It must be galling for the curates to see men of not superior brains and ability living in palaces, legislating in the House of Lords, and enjoying incomes varying from £2,000 to £15,000 yearly. "Blessed be ye poor," is a good text to hurl at dumb congregations, but there is a very wide difference between the curates' modest £5 weekly and the £15,000 yearly of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Curates should be interested to learn that the most hideous of all known costumes, outside of Africa and the South Seas—the episcopal war-paint—costs £200, and we fancy that a curate's wife is not so expensively arrayed, even on her wedding-day. Hospitality to the tune of thousands a year should stagger them, for much burgundy, sherry, and other liquid nourishment may be procured for a few pounds. "The stair-carpet at Farnham Castle are measured by miles," moaned old Bishop Thorold. "My episcopal salary goes in pergolas," complained Bishop Stubbs. It is, indeed, the most complete and ironic of contrasts, to turn from the very fanciful picture of an alleged Nazarene carpenter to Lambeth Palace with its guard room; Fulham Palace with its pleasure grounds, Farnham Palace with its deer park; and Wells with its moated garden.

The Ecclesiastical Commissioners, who are the trustees of the vast wealth of this English State Church could so easily improve the Spartan fare of the curates. They have only "to shake the superfluous to them," as Shakespeare expresses it. One cannot for a moment think that these Christian gentlemen, these descendants of the twelve disciples, would act like the distracted stockbroker who emptied a bowl of goldfish out of the window, remarking, "I can't afford to keep you beggars any longer. I've had a rotten day in the City."

Ecclesiastics, however, are as slippery as eels. They have already put up a piteous appeal that there are not enough clergy, and that they cannot pay those that labour in the Lord's Vineyard. In all probability they will get more than sufficient money from wealthy sympathisers. That should content them

for a while, but only for a time. For of all the greedy things on this planet, sharks, crocodiles, and company promoters, none can ever hope to compete with priests in full cry after money. Being in the self-same business, the curates should know that priests, as a class, are profiteers, and as unscrupulous as their commercial rivals. Idealism in the pulpit may be very well in its way, but the most ruthless business methods are used outside. That is why we hate to find the poor curates sitting disconsolate and chanting:—

"Perhaps it was right to dissemble your love,
But why did you kick us downstairs."

MIMNERMUS.

God Does Not Exist.

IN an article entitled *Does God Exist?* which appeared in the *Freethinker* for September 11, 1932, my aim was to show that this problem is one which cannot be formulated without the use of language. Consequently, unless we have a proper understanding of the functions and limitations of the instrument of expression which we are compelled to use in formulating the problem, it is most unlikely that we will be able to arrive at any solution. The cleverest mathematician cannot solve the simple equation $x=y$ unless he is given some definite value for x or y . So in the absence of any definite values for the words *God* and *exist*, it is impossible to ascertain whether the statement "God exists" is true or not.

As a start to the solution of this question I analysed the words *God* and *exist*, and found that the meanings given to the first word could be classed under three heads. One of these comprised all those meanings acceptable to God-believers. The remaining two comprised meanings not acceptable to God-believers in that they referred to things admittedly real and material (like idols) and to things admittedly unreal and non-existent (like myths). The verb to *exist* could be classed under four heads which I called the metaphorical, the qualified, the limited and the literal senses. I concluded by saying that, by forming the necessary combinations, it would be possible to determine whether God does or does not exist by verifying the resultant statements in experience.

It is now my purpose to give examples of some of the combinations so formed, and to examine the implications to which they give rise. As we only need to deal with the problem in so far as it concerns God-believers, we may omit the two categories of Gods which are not acceptable to them. Obviously from the point of view of intelligent Christians, Jews, Mahometans, etc., we do not need to prove that idols are not *God* in their sense of the word; nor do we need to prove the non-existent nature of things like myths. So we are left with the one category of meanings for the word *God*, namely, that which is acceptable to God-believers, and with four senses of the verb to *exist*. In combination these form the four following statements:—

- (1) God exists in the *metaphorical* sense (as we might say "poverty exists.")
- (2) God exists in the *qualified* sense (as we might say "a memory exists.")
- (3) God exists in the *limited* sense (as we might say "pain exists.")
- (4) God exists in the *literal* sense (as we might say "London exists.")

Broadly speaking the word *metaphorical* is used as opposed to *literal*. From this point of view the first three senses in which *exist* is used are all metaphorical. But for the sake of clearness I have sub-

divided the larger category into three, limiting the first to those phrases in which the main factor is a pure verbal abstraction. The second sub-division is limited to those phrases in which the main factor is mental; while the third concerns factors that are purely sensational (*i.e.*, relating to the bodily senses).

Now when we use words that are verbal abstractions, like *poverty*, we realize (or should do so) that these are abbreviations or condensations of much longer verbal explanations. They are "short-speech" terms employed for linguistic convenience. Thus to explain *poverty* we might say something like this: "When a person has very little food and money, when his clothes are ragged and when he finds it difficult to earn a livelihood, then we say he is poor or living in a state of *poverty*. *Poverty*, therefore, is a short way of describing variable conditions involving real persons and real property; and such conditions are not to be found everywhere, nor at all times. But when we find conditions similar to this we say that *poverty exists*, while when such conditions are absent we say that *poverty does not exist*."

This explanation should be enough to show what I mean by the *metaphorical* use of the verb "to exist." And while it is quite a legitimate use of the word to say that anything *exists* in this sense, it only implies a relative existence and always involves the equal possibility of non-existence. By saying that "Poverty exists," we do not assert that the opposite statement can never be true. So if the verb is used in this sense when speaking of God, we cannot simultaneously declare that the opposite statement is always untrue. In other words, if we use the verb to *exist* in this sense, then the two statements "God exists" and "God does not exist" are equally true.

Let us now take the *qualified* sense of "to exist." When I use words like "mental picture" or "memory," I am referring to something which is taking place in my own mind and which cannot be proved apart from my mind. I may have the memory of a play or the mental picture of a Jabberwock, and it is a legitimate use of language to say that such a "memory" or "mental picture" exists. But the existence of these things is *qualified* by my own mental operations and does not imply their existence for anyone else. If we use the verb "to exist" in this sense, therefore, we have to admit that what can be said to exist for one person can also, with perfect truth, be said not to exist for another. From which it follows that if it is true for one person to say "God exists" in this sense, it is equally true for another person to say "God does not exist."

The third, or *limited* sense, is, in a way, a special case of the preceding. For, as far as the evidence goes, all bodily sensations are dependent upon the mind. Yet they are not purely mental phenomena, and they differ from them in that there are means of verifying them apart from the individual mind. Thus, if I say that "Pain exists," I can prove its existence by sticking a pin into someone's finger and asking him if he feels anything. If he replies in the affirmative, I would then say: "That feeling which you say you have, and whose existence you thereby admit, is what I call pain." In other similar ways the legitimate use of the verb "to exist" can be shown with reference to all bodily sensations. But although existence of this sort can be proved, it is *limited* to the extent that it is dependent upon special conditions, some of which preclude the possibility of existence altogether. Thus to a colour-blind or totally blind person colours do not exist as they do to one who is not so afflicted. Pain is purely local, and to

some parts of the body this feeling is non-existent. An object which is said to be red, is seen to be a different colour in another light. And so on. It follows that when we say something exists in this sense, we are merely implying a *limited* and conditional existence, which necessitates non-existence apart from these limits and conditions. So if we assert that "God exists" in this sense, we can with equal truth assert that "God does not exist" too.

Apart from this, it is interesting to note that God-believers try to evade this conclusion by claiming to possess some special sense, not possessed by Atheists, by which they can "perceive" God. But this does not obviate the difficulty that if God's existence depends upon a special sense, then he *actually does not exist* in the absence of this sense, in exactly the same way as pain is non-existent to a person who is not suffering and colour non-existent to the blind. In other words, God's existence is conditional and limited, and is not absolute. Nor does this claim cancel the equally pertinent objection that what God-believers fancy to be a special sense is, in fact, an abnormality which is no more proof of the existence of that which they "perceive" than the visions of a drug-addict are proof of the existence of pink mice. The claim to possess a special sense is not proved by mere assertion.

Lastly we come to the *literal* sense of the verb "to exist." Be it noted that, when used in any other sense, the verb implies that existence and non-existence can be asserted with equal truth. In the *literal* sense there is no such implication. In this sense the implication always is that the assertion of existence is incompatible with and negative of the opposite assertion—and *vice versa*. In other words, if a man says that "London exists" in the *literal* sense, the statement is either true or untrue—it cannot be both at any given time. He cannot fall back upon the excuse that he was using the verb in a *metaphorical*, or *qualified*, or *limited* sense. The statement is unlike such statements as "Poverty exists," "A mental picture exists," or "Pain exists," which may be equally true or untrue at one and the same time.

Now, if I assert that "my watch exists," in the majority of cases it is of no importance whether I am able to prove the truth of my assertion or not. But if in any one instance I make the statement freely and for the express purpose of claiming its truth, then unless I am able to prove it true I am convicted of lying. My watch may or may not exist, but that is beside the point. If I *state* that it does, I cannot claim that my statement is true unless I can prove it to be so. And herein lies the crux of the matter in regard to the claim made by God-believers that the statement "God exists" is a truth at all times and in all places. For when the statement is made, no God-believer at any time or in any place has been able to prove it to be true. They only declare—at least nowadays—that it cannot be proved untrue.

But such is not the case. For, taking any given definition of God which is acceptable to God-believers, the statement that "God exists" has been and can always be proved untrue in the *literal* sense, whether God be described as "Father of all," "Eternal Spirit," "First Cause," "Categorical Imperative," or what not, it is possible to prove in fact and experience that no such thing exists in the *literal* sense. Any one of these may be said to exist *metaphorically*, or in a *qualified*, or *limited*, or *conditional* or *relative* sense. And in any of these cases it is legitimate to use the verb "to exist." But since they all imply the equal truth of non-existence—that is to say, since the statement "God does not exist" is a truth in any of these senses—it is clear

that there is no meaning of the word *God* which refers to anything which literally exists.

To put the matter quite briefly: using the word *God* in any sense which is acceptable to God-believers, and using the verb to *exist* in any sense at all, the statement "God does not exist" is always true.

C. S. FRASER.

A Strange Judicial Custom.

EVEN in our relatively efficient age many murmur at the delays, inconsistencies and anomalies of the law. Nor are these complaints uncalled for. When we reflect on the obscurities and uncertainties of our statutes, which even the ablest judges seem unable to determine, or when we ruefully consider the frightful costs of litigation when cases are carried from the Courts below to the Supreme Court of Judicature in the House of Lords, we may well think that law and justice are by no means synonymous terms.

Yet, when we contrast modern legal procedure with the barbarous methods long prevalent in Christendom, it is obvious that marked advances have been made. Man is moulded by heredity and environment, although the immense influences alike exerted by past and present are seldom understood. As Dr. H. C. Lea contended in his scholarly volume *Superstition and Force*: "Since the origin of society each unit of our race has struggled on in his allotted path, through joys and griefs, fashioned, for the most part, by the invisible network of habits, customs and statutes which surround him on every side and silently shape his daily actions. Thus the history of jurisprudence becomes the history of the life of man, and the society of distant ages is more distinctly presented to us in the crabbed sentences of codes than in the flowing rhetoric of the historian."

Among our untutored ancestors the right of retaliation for injuries received was dearly cherished. An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth was the universal custom with Germanic races. Some required reparation from the *mallum*, the judicial assembly of the tribe, while others assembled their kindred and friends to exact satisfaction by force of arms. Intermittent civil conflict slowly succumbed to the practice of compensation, and every injury had its stated price payable to the aggrieved family for, as the relatives were compelled to participate in the warfare, so were they the sharers in the *W'ehrgild*, or blood-money, paid to the injured tribesman. But should the criminal's poverty preclude his payment of the *W'ehrgild* his kindred became responsible for it, and they were also compelled to support him in the feud.

The Salique Law seems to have been the first written code of Teutonic origin, and is little older than the reign of Clovis. By that time the Franks were more settled and civilized. Real and personal possessions had attained importance. Value was set on cornlands, orchards, and gardens, while mills and watercraft ranked, as wealth, in company with the droves of cattle and weapons that comprised their sole property when, some generations earlier, Tacitus delineated the Germanic barbarians.

Yet, the same basic features persisted, and the right of intestine warfare was retained. Those in authority strove to soften the fiery impulsiveness of the Frank as well as the vengeful methods to which he clung. So, under an official tariff every offence against person or property had its appointed price—"from the theft of a sucking-pig to the armed occupation of an estate, and from a wound in the little finger to the most atrocious of parricides; nor can

the offender refuse to appear when duly summoned before the *mallum*, or claim the right of armed defence if the injured party has recourse to peaceable proceedings."

Pursuit of private warfare for the purposes of vengeance had small concern with the proof of guilt, or with the establishment of innocence, as the case might be. But in a Court of Justice, however rude in character, trial and verdict became indispensable in the administration of law.

The rules of evidence have attracted the acutest intellects in all ages, for the subtleties and complexities of evidential logic extend to every department of human interest. To a sincere believer in an omniscient and right-loving divinity, what more rational than to assume that when appealed to under solemn oath, God would confer victory on the injured, while inflicting defeat on the injurer.

Oath-taking consequently played a prominent part in the new judicial scheme. Among the Anglo-Saxons, the royal word was accepted as truth, while a thane or mass-priest might rebut a charge with a single oath. The majority of clerks and laymen, however, could only clear themselves by more elaborate swearing.

That perjury was brazenly committed under the most solemn oaths was obvious to our rough but sagacious forefathers. They therefore desired a sounder guarantee for the veracity of litigants' sworn testimony. Swearing in the presence of sacred objects is common among the uncivilized. In Christendom, relics of saints, the Scriptures, the crucifix and other holy objects were deemed potent accessories in swearing.

In Saxon England sworn statements were duplicated and re-duplicated. The oath of a plaintiff was sworn successively in four churches, while the defendant could nullify the charge by swearing an oath of negation in twelve. Prelates after celebrating mass in several churches might swear on each altar and thus absolve themselves from the most serious charges.

The superstitious veneration with which relics were regarded made them popular instruments of oath-taking. Surely, it was said, even a hardened perjurer would hesitate in risking his soul's salvation by swearing falsely on sacred objects. In the Penitential of Theodore it is assumed that a lying oath on a consecrated cross needs for absolution "three times the penance necessary in cases where the oath has been taken on an unconsecrated one."

The reign of justice was practically impossible under a system so illogical and absurd. The mere denial on oath made by cattle stealers, homicides and other malefactors resulted in acquittal. This easy avenue of escape was viewed with aversion by men but recently accustomed to the blood-price. Their ancestral customs made a powerful appeal for restoration, and the *hocus focus* of Church and State fell into disfavour.

A system known as canonical compurgation was for centuries part of the English law, and lasted to the reign of Elizabeth. As part of the civil law, this quaint custom was known as the Wager of Law, under which a person wishing to prove his innocence of a charge urged against him appeared in company with a number of compurgators who swore, not as to their knowledge of the facts, but as to their belief. In fact, they testified as "sharers and partakers of the oath of denial."

Despite its irrational character, the Wager of Law subsequently became a recognized part of the jurisprudence of Europe from Italy to Scotland. The Church was not slow to avail herself of its advantages and, amid a population still wedded to its heathen

traditions, this restored Teutonic procedure served admirably as a safeguard against the encroachments of secular-minded princes and barbarian peoples. Compurgators were extensively recruited from the clerical caste and were invariably in evidence to swear to the innocence of their order. Long practically part of the ecclesiastical law, compurgation had been employed by the Papacy itself. Its legality, however, was not fully established until 800 A.D., when Charlemagne, proceeding to Rome to indict the Pope Leo III. for certain malpractices, officially recognized the oaths of compurgators. No witnesses ventured to appear against the Pope, and the Holy Father purged himself of the offences urged against him by taking an oath of denial with twelve priests acting as compurgators.

Although the custom became so general its efficacy was not everywhere acknowledged. Oath-taking tests were occasionally supplemented by the appeal to arms. This was the well known Wager of Battle, while other doubtful cases were determined by means of the Ordeal, in which God himself was supposed to manifest the truth unto men.

Compurgation tended to decline at an earlier age in those countries most influenced by Roman Law than elsewhere. In England, however, although even in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries its importance had greatly declined, the Wager of Law remained on the Statute Book so late as 1833. A case occurred in Court in 1799 when, despite all official efforts to prevent the farce, a defendant impudently avoided the payment of a claim with the aid of compurgators who "each held up his right hand, and then laid their hands upon the book and swore that they believed that what the defendant said was true."

An even worse instance was recorded in 1824 when an antiquarian lawyer resurrected the ancient statute on behalf of a shady client. Then, nine years later, in 1833, Parliament, at last convinced that no Act, however pernicious, becomes obsolete until it is repealed, abolished the Wager of Law by 3 and 4 William iv., c. 42, s. 13.

T. F. PALMER.

Acid Drops.

A Mr. B. H. Ward writes Mr. Cohen apropos of his letter to the *Manchester Guardian*, which is dealt with in "Views and Opinions":—

In this country if a man is suffering from small-pox (in a minority, happily) he is isolated, and not allowed to spread infection among his fellows. It seems to me that the plan is equally desirable when a person is suffering from spiritual small-pox as Freethinking.

This is intended to be very cutting, but Mr. Ward will probably be surprised to know that I thoroughly agree with him—if Christianity is really true. It forms the basis and a justification of all Christian persecution and intolerance—if Christianity is true.

If Christianity is true, every reason that stands good for isolating a man suffering from disease, every argument that holds good for putting a man under restraint, or even killing him in order to prevent the rest of the people catching his disease, holds good with regard to the Freethinker, who by converting Christians from their faith imperils their immortal safety. I can assure Mr. Ward that his logic is impeccable. If Christianity is true, persecution is a logical corollary. If Christianity is true, a Christian ought to do his best to put the Freethinker out of existence. That is what makes Christianity such a damnably anti-social and barbarous creed. Mr. Ward is a very good Christian. And a really con-

vinced, sincere, logical Christian is an anomaly and a danger in a civilized community. Christians are only tolerable to the degree that their religious convictions have been weakened by civilizing influences. We are obliged to Mr. Ward for his letter. He is of the stuff that peoples heaven, and makes life on earth about as bad as it can be. But he is a very, very good Christian. He is acting as a sincere Christian ought to act. Better men only *think* they are Christians.

Japan has practically abandoned the League of Nations and the first real test for the League has materialized. But already some of the most Christian of our yellow press is shrieking that our "vital interest" lies with Britain and not with Geneva or Japan, and that in any case we would not submit to a judgment of another nation or a group of nations on anything that we believed affected our honour. Which means that a nation ought only to submit to a judgment from an appointed tribunal when its decision does not seriously conflict with what the nation wants, and that our "Stuntists" have not yet learned the lesson that the real, the vital interests of nations to-day lies wherever our communications extend. If a man can trust to the decision of an appointed tribunal on questions that touch his personal honour, it seems strange that he cannot do so in cases where it affects what is called "national honour" even though in the majority what passes for "honour" is often not much more than lust of conquest, or of power, or greed, or an ethic that is not above that of unhumanized nature.

Of course, the fundamental weakness of the League of Nations is that it is made up of the old political and diplomatic gangs. We pointed out this evil feature of it when it was first constituted, and all that has happened has justified what we said in 1920: It was not so very unlike appointing the leaders of American gangdom to see that American justice was administered in the manner in which it ought to be administered, and trusting to the nature of the new occupation to cure the administrators of their evil ways. These men all have their own game to play. Not one of them really trusts any of the others. They are tied down by secret understandings made before the war, during the war, and since the war. A genuinely international tribunal should be made of better stuff.

Before walking out of the League Assembly the Japanese leader made what the papers called an "impassioned" appeal to the assembly and said "I speak as a Christian." That was really the right thing to say and was strictly correct. For the great quality of Christianity is to provide a mantle of righteousness which will not merely hide from the world, but, what is more important, from a man himself, the real nature of the motives that are urging him to action. What other creed than Christianity can so well disguise intolerance and cruelty and slander of opponents as a religious duty? What has so effectually disguised international piracy as a religious and moral duty as Christianity has done? That phrase, "I speak as a Christian," deserves to be in letters of gold. It is so true, and it has so well served some of the greatest crimes and masked the greatest evils the world has known.

Our compliments to the Rev. H. Tyler Lane, of Harrogate. He is the stuff of which saints are made and which helps to fill heaven—and other places. He contributes an article to the *Harrogate Advertiser* on Shaw's *Black Girl*, from which we extract the following gem:—

The fundamental question in religion is not so much the existence of God, but what is his nature and purpose in the world.

Now how is a stupid Freethinker to get over that, and why did not Bernard Shaw realize this? It really does not matter whether there is a God or not, but only what the devil is he aiming at and what the devil is his purpose, even if he doesn't exist? Now that is a really im-

pregnable position. Mr. Lane stands four-square to the winds of unbelief, and says, I don't care a button whether there is a God or not, I am going to believe in him even if he isn't there, and I am going to believe he has a purpose in the world even though there is no God to have a purpose. If that doesn't gain him a front place in heaven nothing will. He looks like a natural successor to James Douglas and the Bishop of London. He has enough of the outstanding qualities of these two to fill both their jobs.

Readers of reports of Police Court proceedings in the press are numerous, for the seamy side of life is strangely attractive to them. There was a case at Hampstead Police Court the other day, in which a woman was applying for separation and maintenance from her husband. She described him as "a Freethinker, a Communist, an Atheist," and said he "does not believe in anything." A local paper puts this in the forefront of its report. If, however, this Christian lady's husband had been, shall we say a Churchman, a Conservative, and a Freemason, it is highly improbable that those circumstances would have been mentioned either by her or by the newspaper. Yet for every Freethinker who is a party to such a case there must be thousands of Christians!

Now that Dr. Orchard is safely sheltered in the Roman Church, he is not afraid to talk about other religions. Some remarks of his in the *Universe* on Mithraism make interesting if disingenuous reading. He admits that there are resemblances between Mithraism and Christianity, and does his best to minimise the shock for his readers. "The only certain borrowing that Christianity made," he says, "was in choosing December 25, which Mithraism celebrated as the day of the unconquered sun, as the day in which Christ's nativity, which is perhaps unknown, should be observed. This was, however, in accordance with the general policy of Catholicism in adopting anything from pagan customs which were innocuous and capable of being Christianized." So the cat is out of the bag!

Dr. Orchard is very sure, however, that the many resemblances between Mithraism and Catholicism "need not be traced to diabolical counterfeits." We quite agree that the Devil can be left out of the question. But "the pictures of Mithra's birth from a rock, witnessed by worshipping shepherds and the stories of Christ's nativity, and the ascription to Mithra of such titles as Saviour and Mediator," and many other Christian and Mithraic institutions cannot be explained away as "nothing more than coincidences." The real explanation is that Mithraism, the other pagan religions and Christianity are all based on "mysteries" credulity and nonsense; and readers of J. M. Wheeler's book *Paganism in Christian Festivals*, will find therein more than ample proof of this. Still it is interesting to find that the truth is however slowly, finding its way into the Roman Catholic Church at last.

Councillor Handley, at a meeting of the Northumberland County Council, which was voting for information on Birth Control to be given at certain clinics to poor women, was, we are sorry to say the only Roman Catholic present who opposed the resolution. The other Catholics present did not support him; and our object in calling attention to this is to suggest that excommunication is not sufficient punishment for these backsliders. How about a return to Mr. Chesterton's Golden Age and a little boiling oil?

The *Universe* claims that the Roman Catholic Church "has a divine mission to every Anglican, Nonconformist, Jew and Unbeliever," and their "conversion should be constantly in our thoughts. And more important still it should be ever present in our prayers." January 20 is

a good day, we are told, for prayers for the Church of England heretics. January 21, for Lutherans and Protestants. January 23, for bad Catholics, and January 24, for the Conversion of Jews. We suggest every day from January 1 to December 31 is necessary for the conversion of *Freethinker* readers, but of course it depends on the quality of the prayers as well as to how many will make a bee-line for the nearest priest. Will the *Universe* this time next year favour us with reliable statistics of the number of Freethinkers who have gone over as the result of this mass prayer attack?

Mr. Horace Leaf, the well known Spiritualist, is very sorry for Atheists. He agrees that Atheists are "prepared to face the problems of life honestly, and that they refuse to deceive themselves," and also that "it requires no little courage to oppose public opinion." All the same, we are missing a mountain of good things in not frankly accepting the beautiful (if rather vague) truths of Spiritualism. Mr. Leaf, in an inspiring article in *The Two Worlds*, points out that Spiritualism has "boldly adopted the scientific method!" This is butting in with a vengeance, but as everything Spiritualism claims has now been proved up to the hilt, through science, "the Atheist must abandon his scepticism or remain biassed and uninformed." No sceptic, who remains such, can be a Spiritualist. We thank Mr. Leaf for the admission.

The poor Jews! There is a certain class of Christians who blame them for everything, whereas the one crime they committed against civilization is hardly ever brought against them. They gave the Christians the "sacred book" and their God. That was a really unforgivable crime, but the cock-eyed intellectuality of Christian advocates count it a virtue. But the most startling crime laid to the credit of the Jews has been discovered by a Catholic priest of Armidale, New South Wales. He asserts that they have hold of the cinemas and with them have "worked out a cunning programme for the overthrow of Christianity." And the worst of it appears to be that God is not wide awake enough to stop their doing it.

Not to be outdone by the *Church Times*, which recently described the *Freethinker* as "a jerry-built Victorian structure," Mr. G. K. Chesterton, in his very own paper (*G.K.'s Weekly*) says he has just seen for the first time for many years, "the dear old *Freethinker*," that "it remains precisely and literally what it was when I was a boy," and that it "cannot bring itself to believe that anybody is interested in what is happening to-day." Yet it is in reply to a recent article in the *Freethinker*, dealing with one of his own in the *London Mercury* of the same month on a theme which Mr. Chesterton evidently thinks is topical for that journal, that he has now taken up his pen. What is more, although he says the *Freethinker* charges him "with not proving what I had never set out to prove," he admits—in the only quotation he makes from this journal—that the opinion here attributed to him as the necessary consequence of what he said is "exactly what Mr. Chesterton said." We have interpreted Mr. Chesterton to himself to his own satisfaction. The *Freethinker*, says G.K.C., is the same to-day as it was when he was a boy, and therefore much behind the times; but when Mr. Chesterton was a boy his religion was about 400 years behind the times, and now that he is an older if not a wiser man, he has joined a religion that is, if its own claim is true, the same to-day as it was 2,000 years ago. Who is he to talk about "the end of the moderns"? They, at any rate are not 2,000 years behind the times.

Although God is said to have made of one blood every nation under heaven, there is no place in which there is so much class distinction as a Church. Thus the Vicar of Hampstead (the Rev. H. T. Carnegie) be-

moans the fact that there is no "corporate spirit" among his flock. "There are," he says, "almost three distinct groups of worshippers at the Church," and "they hardly ever meet." He has not much faith in mere social intercourse between the various sections—perhaps because he knows it is largely a matter of class distinction or snobbery. It is only "by the realization of our common membership in Christ" that, the Vicar thinks, a more genial and united spirit can be brought about. It is clear that it is as difficult to get Christians to know, as it is to get them to "love one another."

Step by step the association between the Church and Nonconformity is being strengthened. They both realize that what they have in common to lose by secularist developments is much more than they gain by insisting on their divisions. The latter are by no means wiped out: but the tendency to get together is exhibited in fresh quarters almost daily. The anti-church attitude of the Dissenters during the Education Act struggle of 1902 has faded out. The Passive Resister is no more. Instead the Council of Christian Education, representing the Free Church of England and Wales urges the importance of "improved training of teachers to give instruction in religious subjects."

The Council also pleads for "fair terms" for non-provided schools taken over on their condemnation as unsuitable, and calls the attention of ministers and laity to "the importance of supplementing religious instruction given in the day schools by the influences of the churches and Sunday schools. The famous Cowper Temple clause is at last described by this Council in terms which accurately indicate its object, namely "to do valuable work for religion!"

A writer in the *Christian World* says that "A fellow cannot play the fool in the week who has taken a prominent part in the church's service on Sunday." This is assuming too much. Taking a prominent part in a church service may provide enough foolishness to satisfy some people for a whole week. But it is a long time between Sundays, and there are plenty who will only have their appetites sharpened by what they have had on Sunday. Otherwise what is the significance of the week-night services?

Fifty Years Ago.

CHRISTIAN charity has grown so cold-blooded in its vindictiveness since the "pioneer days" that blasphemers are treated like beasts rather than men. There is a certain callous refinement in the punishment awarded to heretics to-day. Richard Carlile, and other heroes of the struggle for a free press, were mostly treated as first-class misdemeanants; they saw their friends when they liked, had whatever fare they could pay for, were allowed the free use of books and writing materials, and could even edit their papers from gaol. All that is changed now. A "blasphemer" who is sent to prison now gets a month of Cross's plank-bed, is obliged to subsist on the miserable prison fare, is dressed in prison garb, is compelled to submit to every kind of physical indignity, is shut out from all communication with his relatives or friends except for one visit during the second three months, is denied the use of pen and ink, and debarred from all reading except the blessed Book. England and Russia are the only two countries in Europe that make no distinction between press offenders and ordinary criminals. The brutal treatment which was meted out to Mr. Truelove in his seventieth year, when his grey hairs should have been his protection, is what the outspoken sceptic must be prepared to face. After eighteen centuries of Christianity, and an interminable procession of Christian "evidences" such is the reply of orthodoxy to the challenge of its critics.

The "*Freethinker*," March 4, 1883.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL:

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

W. BEAMAN.—Thanks for picture. The two excellent things in this world are a sense of humour and a lively appreciation of human stupidity. The latter prevents one expecting too much, and the former enables one to smile when otherwise one might be tempted to weep. We shall hope to meet the Chester friends soon. Glad you enjoyed the Liverpool meeting so much.

W.R.—Will do as requested. Thanks.

C. C. DOVE.—As you will see, we are dealing with the *Manchester Guardian* and the B.B.C. in this issue. The *Guardian*, judging from the copies of the article sent us is taken by a large number of our readers. Shall be pleased to hear from you further. We are often thinking of you, but until we can employ a secretary must curtail our indulgence in private correspondence. See "Acid Drops."

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—F. Jackson, 105.; G. Watson, 105.

I. MARTEN.—There are no official figures on the subject and no official census has been taken. But some few years ago (1926) the then *Daily News* and the then *Nation* and *Athenaeum* tried a questionnaire on the religious opinions of its readers. In answer to the question, "Do you believe in a personal God?" only 40 per cent of the readers of the latter who replied answered "Yes," and seventy-two per cent of the *Daily News* readers. It may also safely be assumed that the cultural level of the *Nation* readers would naturally be the case with the readers of the *Daily News*.

M. TAIGEL.—There is a little book by Dr. Max Planck, *The Universe in the Light of Modern Physics*, published at about half a crown, which puts the whole matter as plainly as it can be put. Pleased you find the "Fifty Years Ago" item so interesting. The character of the attack must always be determined by contemporary circumstances.

A. G. LYE.—Something in the direction you suggest might be done later.

J. A. MORSE, J. E. TOWNSEND AND J. A. REID.—Thanks for addresses, paper being sent for six weeks.

A. B. POWELL (S. Africa).—Note you are visiting England, and hope you will pay us a visit, paper being sent to address given after March 8.

R. HARDING.—Thanks.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—
One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 5/9.

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.

To-day (March 5) Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Miners' Hall, Barnsley, at 3 and 7. It is some years since Mr. Cohen spoke in Barnsley, and he has pleasing recollections of the handsome Miners' Hall. We hear that it is expected to be well filled. On Sunday next (March 12) Mr. Cohen visits Leicester.

On Thursday, March 9, a debate will take place in "The Academy," Port Talbot, S. Wales, between Mr. Cohen and the Rev. D. Richards, M.A. The subject of the discussion is, "Is the Christian Conception of Life the Best Answer to World Problems?" The chair will be taken at 7 o'clock.

It was terrible weather in Burnley on Sunday last. The snow continued the whole of the day, and travelling was an ordeal. These conditions naturally interfered with Mr. Cohen's meetings, but in the circumstances it was remarkable that the Phoenix Theatre should have been half filled. Some braved the road and came from Preston, Blackburn and Blackpool. One courageous lady came from Fleetwood, taking several hours on the journey.

The Birmingham Branch will have a lecture to-day (Sunday) by Mr. Albert C. White, on "Church Revenues and National Welfare." The chair will be taken at 7 o'clock in the Bristol Street Schools. Mr. White is by way of being an authority on his subject, and Freethinkers should not only make a point of attending themselves but bring a Christian friend, or two, with them.

There are we know among our readers many teachers who are convinced of the soundness of the policy of Secular Education in all rate-supported schools. For various reasons very many of these allow their belief to rest in the region of theory. But events are shaping themselves in such a fashion that unless those interested wake up they will find themselves saddled with a much larger measure of clerical control than has existed for many years. In view of this the Secular Education League is making an effort to organize teachers so that the attempts to make teachers mere puppets in clerical hands may be defeated. It is useless waiting till the harm is done and then complaining. The time to act is now, and we beg those who are inclined to help to send their names at once to Miss N. Freeman, Acting Secretary, Secular Education League, 12 Palmer Street, Westminster, London, S.W. The matter is urgent, and we hope that Freethinking teachers will not be slow to respond.

ENGLAND IN 1914—AND IN 19—?

(From the *Daily Papers* of February 22.)

"A frenzied mob of patriots thronged the streets of Tokyo to-day . . . shouting encouragement to the leaders of the Jehol invasion. The demonstrations, echoed in every part of Japan, passed unofficial resolutions of support . . . Impressive scenes were witnessed in the precincts of the Yasukuni military shrine. After singing the National Anthem, ex-service demonstrators made a silent prayer, and made obeisance towards the imperial palace."

The Bound Volume of the *Freethinker* for 1932 will be ready in a few days. Last year all available copies were rapidly exhausted, and readers who wish to order should do so without delay. The price is 17s. 6d. plus 1s. postage. Orders will be executed in rotation as received.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* just to hand reports the prosecution of a woman speaker at a Rationalist meeting. The charge was "unseemly language." A Police

Sergeant recorded "a number of Atheistic remarks." The Defendant, denied using the words mentioned, and said she had only quoted from Grant Allen's work *The Evolution of the Idea of God*. The magistrate said the words used were "objectionable and offensive in a Christian country," and "it was high time to stop such language in public places." The woman, Ann Lennon, was fined £10 in default twenty-one days. In the same paper is a report of a case in which a milk vendor found guilty of adulterating milk who was fined £3 or seven days!

A Lecture on the "Life and Times of Charles Bradlaugh" has been prepared for the Bradlaugh Centenary Committee. It can be delivered with or without lantern slides. The lecture and the slides, or both, can be loaned on application to the Secretary of the Committee, at 38 Cursitor Street, E.C.4.

Max Planck on Determinism.

(Concluded from page 118.)

"For the solution of the questions raised by Modern Materialism . . . we can properly look neither to physical science nor to philosophy . . . the answer must come in the main from psychology. This conclusion may be distasteful to you. For, strangely enough, psychology—the science of mental life—has acquired the reputation of being the most materialistic of the sciences; the science which, more than any other, tends to maintain Modern Materialism and to subvert all the ancient beliefs about the status and role of Mind or Spirit that are incompatible with it. (Prof McDougall: *Modern Materialism and Emergent Evolution*. p. 18.)

THE foundations of Modern Materialism were laid when Copernicus and Galileo had established the Heliocentric theory, and Newton discovered the laws of gravitation. From Newton's laws Kant and Laplace formulated the Nebular Hypothesis of the origin of Stars and Planets, later, when Darwin published his *Origin of Species*, the circle was complete; everything was found to be ruled by natural law, the operation of which could be traced backwards in infinite time, and could be predicted for infinite ages to come. Eclipses and Comets were not due to the sporadic action of a capricious deity, but could be predicted to appear with unfailing regularity ages in advance. Gods and spirits were no longer necessary, there was nothing for them to do.

Protestants are never tired of telling how the Romish Church tried to suppress the new theory of Copernicus and Galileo, but they forget to mention that the Protestant Churches were quite unanimous in condemning the new theory. Luther himself described Copernicus as an "upstart astrologer," and a "fool."¹ The two Churches were equally violent against Newton's discovery of the laws of gravitation. Liebnitz declared that Newton had "sapped the foundations of natural religion." Other theologians charged Newton with having deprived God of the works ascribed to him in the Bible "and transferred the credit to material mechanism," and that he had "substituted gravitation for providence." This, indeed, was true.

It took the Romish Church about two hundred years to admit its error. The Protestant Churches gave in more quickly. They found that the ideas prevailed, and were not to be exorcised by the theological curses. Therefore, as the facts could not be got round, or got over, they must be swallowed, and we presently find the Pope singing:—

Nature and nature's laws lay hid in night;
God said, "Let Newton be!" and all was light.

Science, since then, has gone on conquering and to conquer; explaining by the operation of natural laws

the events attributed to the hand of God. Nowhere has it detected any intrusion, or intervention, of any supernatural powers to falsify its predictions. Take, for instance, the *Nautical Almanac*, it is published for years in advance. Mariners put absolute trust in it, and are never let down. This advance went on until, as Huxley observed, it weighed like a nightmare upon believers, who "watch what they conceive to be the progress of Materialism, in such fear and powerless anger as a savage feels, when, during an eclipse, the great shadow creeps over the face of the sun."²

Euclid's geometry, as we all know, is based on axioms. During the nineteenth century, Lobatchewsky, a Russian mathematician, and Riemann a German mathematician, invented new systems of geometry, based upon different axioms to those of Euclid. It was upon the new geometry of Riemann, known, together with Lobatchewsky's, as the Non-Euclidean geometry, that Einstein based his new theory of Relativity, which some simple people believe has destroyed the Newtonian system and with it Determinism. The truth is, as Einstein is the first to admit, it is extremely difficult to find cases in which Einstein's theory has any advantage over the Newtonian, and even then, as in the famous case of the orbit of Mercury, very delicate observations were needed to reveal the small discrepancy between the two systems, by which Einstein's system was found to apply the most accurately. But no matter, a flaw had been found in the Newtonian physics. The iron laws had been found wanting, gravitation also was said to be a myth, although things seemed to retain their weight as usual, especially if they fell on your toes.

The Psalmist advises us not to put our trust in princes. Very good advice. But if Newton could return to life, his advice would probably be, put not your trust in priests. For, during his lifetime he was roundly denounced, by the preachers of all denominations, as a teacher of infidelity. Then, when his system prevailed, it was adopted and he was claimed as a prop of the Church. Now the pulpits have cast him out again and we hear no more about "God said let Newton be," and there is joy in the pulpits of Christendom.

This wave of reaction to mysticism has been accentuated by the so-called "principle of indeterminacy" expounded by Heisenberg by the aid of Max Planck's Quantum; which makes it appear that in the innermost workings of the atom, to use Sir James Jeans' expression, "nature abhors accuracy and precision above all things."³ Max Planck thinks so little of this discovery, that, although he discusses Heisenberg's application of the Quantum theory in his new book, yet he makes no allusion to indeterminacy whatever. There is an Epilogue to his book consisting of, a Socratic dialogue between Einstein, Planck, and Mr. Murphy, the translator of the book, who opens the discussion by stating that he has been working at the problem of causation and the freedom of the human will. To which Einstein replies: "Honestly I cannot understand what people mean when they talk about the freedom of the human will. I have a feeling, for instance, that I will something or other; but what relation this has with freedom I cannot understand at all." The debate proceeds:—

MURPHY: But it is now the fashion in physical science to attribute something like free will even to the routine processes of inorganic nature.

EINSTEIN: That nonsense is not merely nonsense. It is objectionable nonsense.

² Huxley: *Lay Sermons*. p. 142.

³ Jeans: *The Mysterious Universe*. p. 26.

¹ White: *The Warfare of Science*. Vol. I., p. 126.

MURPHY: Well, of course, the scientists give it the name of indeterminism.

EINSTEIN: Look here. Indeterminism is quite an illogical concept. What do they mean by indeterminism? . . . The indeterminism which belongs to quantum physics is a subjective indetermination. It must be related to something, else indeterminism has no meaning, and here it is related to our inability to follow the course of individual atoms and forecast their activities. To say that the arrival of a train in Berlin is indetermined is to talk nonsense unless you say in regard to what it is determined. If it arrives at all it is determined by something. And the same is true of the course of atoms.⁴

Einstein even goes further than this, for he observes "I believe that events in nature are controlled by a much stricter and more closely binding law than we suspect to-day, when we speak of one event being the cause of another." (p. 203.) So the reactionary mystics and obscurantists cannot count Einstein among the freewillers or indeterminists.

W. MANN.

⁴ Max Planck: *Where is Science Going*. pp. 201-2.

Bradlaugh Year Centenary Notes.

III.—DISSENTERS AND THE OATH.

DISSENTERS claim to stand for "religious equality," but this is much short of liberty. The opposition to Bradlaugh taking his seat was by Christians including (with few honourable exceptions) Nonconformists. Their attitude at the time is well represented in a Lecture delivered at Exeter by a Baptist Minister (Rev. W. Hillier) on March 2, 1883. He was supported by clergy and gentry, and the local Archdeacon (Woolcombe) being kept away by "cold air"—or, perhaps, cold feet—wrote expressing his "strong sympathy." Dr. Hillier's Lecture is entitled: *Should Christians support Mr. Bradlaugh, the Avowed Atheist, in his attempt to get into Parliament?*

The Lecturer said: "He did not consider that this question was one of Protestantism versus Catholicism, or Church versus Dissent, or Liberalism versus Conservatism; it was of a nobler and higher character, viz., Christianity versus Infidelity." (Loud Applause). On the Oath question Dr. Hillier was equally explicit, as will be seen from the following passage. (*Italics ours*):—

I am a Liberal, and believe that no man should be disqualified by his *religious* convictions. But Mr. Bradlaugh is an avowed Atheist, and has no religious convictions (loud applause) and, therefore, is not opposed on that account. His case is unique and has no analogy in the history of Nonconformity, and, therefore, Nonconformists are fully justified when they oppose or refuse to vote for an Arch-Infidel.

So much for dissenting ideas of religious "equality" when Dissenters had their "liberalism" and supposed love of liberty put to an acid test.

This man, whom Christians of all denominations tried to keep out of Parliament was, according to John (Lord) Morley (*Gladstone*, Vol. III., p. 11) a man who "had abundant and genuine public spirit and a strong love of truth according to his lights, and he was both a brave and a disinterested man." And Gladstone himself, who never had the courage to tell his Party how wrong most of them were about Bradlaugh, said (when Bradlaugh was in his grave), that he was "a distinguished man and an admirable member of this House."

A.C.W.

Bradlaugh in Debate.

II.

LOOKING through the printed reports of the many debates held by Charles Bradlaugh over a period of nearly forty years, one cannot help being struck by the extraordinary grasp of his subject whatever it was. Never (as far as I have been able to judge) did he enter any debate without very careful preparation. Moreover, he was not a one-subject man. It is true that he was obliged to debate on the Bible and on God, but while he often uttered the same arguments, there was always a freshness in his exposition, and he was ready to use as his authorities the very latest writers dealing with the subject under discussion.

Let us take as an example of his versatility in debate, the three discussions he held with Robert Roberts, W. Simpson, and the Rev. W. M. Westerby. For the first a thorough knowledge of Biblical criticism and Christian evidences was indispensable. For the second a history of the case for and against the Disendowment of the Church of England, and for the third not merely a familiarity with philosophy, with Idealism and Materialism, with the whole question of body and mind and spirit, but also with the scientific account of the brain as an organ of consciousness, were essential. And we must not forget that Bradlaugh was a self-taught man, busy with his work as an editor and writer, busy also with his parliamentary struggle, and working with tongue and brain to earn a living as well. His was not, of course, an age of speed as is the present one, but he seemed to crowd, in spite of that, far more into a single day of his life than most men do now in spite of the many advantages which (we think) modern civilization has bestowed upon us.

Robert Roberts was for over thirty years of the latter part of last century a very big figure in Birmingham's religious life. He was a Christadelphian, and in his way, an exceptionally good debater. He was never so happy as when on the platform, and he held quite a large number of debates mostly with Christians of other sects, among whom were, it must be confessed, many who did not love their "enemies," and who obviously hated the Christadelphians—men like David King, also of Birmingham. Roberts was a follower of Dr. John Thomas, the author of enormous works on the Bible proving indisputably that nobody else understood God's Holy Word as he did. Roberts delivered twelve lectures on the Bible, of which he was very proud, because he had them reprinted, and eventually used them as the basis of a larger work entitled *Christianity Astray*, which is still being sold or given away. It was therefore on the Bible that Roberts wanted a discussion, and so certain was he that he had the truth that he took infinite pains to meet Bradlaugh. When, in 1876, the debate was eventually fixed up, two nights were held in Leicester and four in Birmingham, and the carefully published report is worth reading even to-day.

Now it is one thing to hold special ideas on the interpretation of scripture, but quite another to go to orthodox writers in proof of the authenticity and credibility of the Gospels. On such questions as the Trinity, the Messiah, the Resurrection, and Prophecy, Roberts could discourse for days and weeks on end to a delighted audience. The way he dealt with Roman Catholicism, especially as typified by the Whore of Babylon, gave nearly as much pleasure to his hearers as the giving of Extreme Unction to a dying person gives to the priest administering it. Then if you get a Christadelphian in the '60's or '70's of last

century talking on the fulfilment of prophecy with regard to the fate of Turkey, Russia and Rome proved from the Bible, and especially from Daniel, you could never get him to stop, and Roberts was a sort of epitome in himself of all these peculiar idiosyncrasies. Thus it never occurred to him that Bradlaugh would stand any sort of a chance as, leaving aside the marvellous proofs culled from Paley on the credibility and authenticity of the Bible, there were the unanswerable arguments of prophecy including the exact number of years calculated to within a second of time—well, more or less—when Messiah the Prince would come upon a throne to enter into his kingdom.

I must confess—and I have rather a partiality for vigorous controversialists of whom Roberts was one—that some of the childishness of his arguments staggered me. He would not, under any circumstances, admit some of the orthodox interpretations of Biblical problems. But he swallowed without any examination whatever, the “proofs” of Christianity from the early fathers like Justin and Tertullian and writers like the two Clements of Rome and Alexandria. If these people left some supposed writings which indicated their knowledge of the Gospels or some of the Gospels or of only the Apocryphal Gospels, then a sort of Apostolic succession was proven and the events related of Jesus must have actually happened!

Bradlaugh had very little difficulty in putting Roberts in his place. His first speech in this debate is a little masterpiece. He pricked the bubble of Roberts' knowledge of Christian evidences, and the windy Christadelphian exploded with a bang. Bradlaugh was terribly disappointed when he heard the kind of argument his opponent relied upon as it was just the kind of weak nonsense which roused Robert Taylor to write the *Syntagma* and the *Diegesis* nearly fifty years before. And it is apparent that long before the debate was concluded, he had lost any interest in it. Still, it shows his masterly grasp of the so-called “evidences” of Christianity, and as such represents one side of his great versatility.

A month after this a discussion was held at Liverpool on the “Disestablishment and Disendowment of the English Church a Political necessity,” with Mr. W. Simpson, who contested Liverpool in the working-man's interest at the General Election of 1874.

Simpson was a ready and fluent speaker with a way of turning a sentence into a laugh, and thus causing himself and his audience to be on good terms with each other. Bradlaugh commenced with a clear and reasoned speech, remarkable for its style and restrained force, but even more so for the way he had got his arguments together. It is, naturally, quite out of date, for Church conditions in 1876 were vastly different from those of to-day, particularly with regard to statistics. But one cannot help being struck by the way Bradlaugh marshalled his arguments and his knowledge of the Church and its history. He must have been a rapid speaker for in the first half-hour he has filled eight pages of the printed report and it is closely packed with facts, figures and arguments.

There were many interruptions, one man creating a noise, most of the time quite impartially, but on the whole the audience was good tempered and obviously enjoyed the debate. This discussion should be remembered as one again giving him scope for his remarkable many-sidedness.

It was in 1879 that Bradlaugh held the debate with Westerby—which most of his admirers consider one of the best of his career. I have been unable to find any particulars of Westerby, but he was obviously a young

man who had pondered deeply on philosophical questions—of course from an orthodox standpoint.

The subject “Has, or is, Man a Soul?” in competent hands can be made intensely interesting. It is, of course, the fashion for a good many Freethinkers to pooh-pooh all arguments on the question from the point of view of Theism, but they are not so easily answered as that. Theism has been defended by very able men, and both kinds of argument, the *a priori* and the *a posteriori* dealt with by scholars will be found hard nuts to crack. Even the Atheist's case has to be related in the light of modern knowledge, and many terms have to be reconsidered. Naturally, the Theistic case put forward by a Salvation Army captain or Christian Evidence official need not be taken seriously, but Flint or Mansell are in a different category.

Westerby was, in my opinion, one of the cleverest of Bradlaugh's opponents, and if anybody imagines the great Freethinker had an easy task, he should get a friend to read out Westerby's first speech, take notes all the time and then attempt to reply to it in half an hour. He can then compare his speech with Bradlaugh's. He would probably be very disagreeably astonished at himself.

The truth is that Westerby had carefully prepared his opening speech and while we, sitting comfortably in our armchairs (if we have one) can easily pick out the flaws and the snags; it is quite a different matter when one is on a platform following out a subtly reasoned argument on an exceptionally difficult subject to which a reply must be made at once in clear and unhesitating terms. Bradlaugh's grasp of philosophy is shown at its best in this debate, but more remarkable still is his language. Never does he seem to hesitate for a word; his sentences are perfectly formed, clear, incisive, challenging. He is as ready with his authorities as is Westerby, and the way in which he marshalled them, the way in which he even used Westerby's to prove Westerby was wrong or did not understand their implications shows Bradlaugh at his very best. Even the cold printed word cannot hide the oratory, the fire and the enthusiasm which marked his utterances in this debate. Everything outside of it was forgotten. The pride of intellectual battle was there in all its glory, and Bradlaugh rose to heights which mark this debate as one of the greatest in his whole life. Even Westerby could not withhold his admiration, and one can gather how wistfully and regretfully he must have said these words in his final speech:—

Mr. Bradlaugh says he is not a practised athlete in debate. I only wish that I, in power of speech, were as powerful as he. Then I might have done honour to my cause. Certain am I that if I had his side to fight for I should have come much more poorly out. Only by the power of his speech and by the marvellous energy with which he can endow it, can I understand the impression he has produced for you.

Perhaps Bradlaugh rose to his greatest height in his first speech at the Bar of the House of Commons, but in debate he never was better in method and matter than in this discussion with Westerby. If anyone doubts the impression he made on his contemporaries, friends and enemies alike, they will realize why his name was known throughout England when they dip into these old controversies on abstract subjects, battles of the intellect, in which the great men of the past have always delighted, from the time of Socrates.

If some great men have no successors we have at least the legacy of their work. That is why Freethought honours the memory of Charles Bradlaugh.

H. CUTNER.

Notes on Princess Ida.

In the realms of English popular music the names of Gilbert and Sullivan are semi-sacred, and of all the Savoy operas few are now as popular as Princess Ida. This opera was at first a failure, but less than a dozen years ago suddenly leapt into favour, yet its theme, the educated woman, is as dead as the proverbial door-nail.

I have just been listening to Princess Ida wonderfully recorded by The Gramophone Co., on records H.M.V. D.B. 4016 to 4025, and must pay tribute to the singers and the orchestra. All the recording was done under the direction of Mr. R. D'Oyly Carte, and the artists are Richard Watson, Derek Oldham, Charles Goulding, George Baker, Sir Henry Lytton, Darrel Fancourt, Stuart Robertson, Edward Holland, Muriel Dickson, Dorothy Gill, Alice Moxon, and Nellie Briercliffe. The rendering could not possibly be better.

Very early we make the acquaintance of King Gama, who sings a masterpiece of irony about what a genuine philanthropist he is. He endeavours to correct all defects in his erring fellow creatures, he quenches compliment-payers, mortifies vanity, sees the evil intention behind every charitable effort, has a good supply of sarcastic replies, and knows something to everybody's prejudice:—

Yet:—

"Although I try to make myself as pleasant as I can
Yet everybody says I am a disagreeable man
And I can't think why!"

How many people there are in the world like that! Busybodies who try to benefit humanity, but who spoil all their efforts because of their unpleasant little prying ways.

The theme of the opera is that Princess Ida is running a university where there are no males at all. According to King Gama even the cock crowing which wakes them at dawn is done by an accomplished hen, and the ladies have foresworn men regarding them as "nature's sole mistake."

One of the lady students is expelled for having brought a set of chess men into the college, and another maiden is expelled for having drawn a picture of a double perambulator.

This attitude of ridicule towards woman's attempt to become educated was the typical Victorian one, and although Gilbert satirized the idea that women could live happy without men, his satire is to us more of a satire on Victorian ideas.

In the famous song of the Ape and the lady, which Miss Moxon gives us on the sixth record in the series, we hear mocking at the theory of evolution. An ape fell in love with a lady, and shaved off his bristles, docked his tail, grew moustaches, and paid a guinea to a club, besides dressing in civilized clothes, and then christened himself Darwinian man. But the lady would not have him for:—

"Darwinian man though well behaved,
At best is only a monkey shaved."

King Gama towards the end of the opera sings another song which delightfully satirises the eternal grumbler, the man who sees the world getting worse, and who is never happy unless he is miserable. You must hear the full song on the record to appreciate it but the chorus is proverbial:—

"Oh don't the days seem lank and long
When all goes right and nothing goes wrong,
And isn't your life extremely flat
With nothing whatever to grumble at?"

These few random remarks may be enough to remind lovers of Princess Ida of the charming opera, and may introduce the opera to some who do not know it, but the quotations are enough to show that there is wit and wisdom in the vocal score. There are lovely lyrics too to be found, and the best of them are to be heard on these ten records, which the gramophile will want to play again and again.

BAY.

Correspondence.

THE CASE FOR SUNDAY FREEDOM.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I was disappointed by your rather inappreciative notice of the new pamphlets by Lord Snell and Mr. Ernest Thurtle (Ex-M.P. for Shoreditch) on Sunday Games and Sunday Cinemas. You merely say that "they are pleasantly written and should prove useful." In my judgment they promise to be two of the most effective manifestoes yet written in defence of the right to use Sunday without let or hindrance, provided no annoyance be caused to onlookers. I am hoping that the pamphlets will be circulated in tens of thousands wherever rate-payers are asked to decide whether the opening of Cinemas and the joys of healthy games should be permitted on Sundays. To any reader of the *Freethinker* who remits a stamp to cover the cost of postage I will forward a copy of each of the pamphlets gratis.

CHARLES A. WATTS.

5 & 6 Johnson's Court,
Fleet Street, London, E.C.4.

[All we need add to the above is that *Freethinker* paragraphs and articles are written to express the views and impressions of their writers, and they cannot be made responsible for any feeling of disappointment experienced by those who read them. On again glancing over the pamphlets we cannot but see that the expression "pleasantly written" was the correct one.

Something much stronger on the present state of the Sunday question and the cowardly and unjust character of the new Sunday Entertainment Act might have been written, and indeed has been written in some of the daily and weekly papers.

Personally we should have preferred a stronger attack. But that, again, is a matter of individual liking. Mr. Watts is indeed sanguine if he thinks Sunday Entertainments and Sunday Games can be in full swing without causing annoyance to (Christian) onlookers. The Christian claim is an intolerable impertinence.—ED., *Freethinker*.]

"BITTER SWEET."

SIR,—C-de-B. asserts that Freethought is a criticism of life or a critical attitude to life, and so justifies his statement that there is Freethought in "Bitter Sweet." But if so, then the *libretti* of the Gilbert and Sullivan operas are freethinking, so is Hood's "Song of the Shirt," and Belloc's "Mr. Chutterbuck's Election."

Indeed so wide is this definition that Chesterton's "The Flying Inn," is freethinking for it criticizes teetotalism and Mahommedanism. What an opportunity for the paradox—your *real* Freethinker is the Christian.

My second point is simply evaded. I never said that C-de-B. asserted that the *staging* of the play was new. What C-de-B. said was that the *idea* of opening a play at one date, turning back thirty years or so, and then reverting to the opening time was new, and never-to-be-forgotten. I quoted several modern plays embodying the device and showed it was not new ever since Shakespeare's day. Evidently C-de-B. had not struck the device before he met it in "Bitter Sweet," and he wanted to give others the pleasure of a new kind of thrill—and my comment was intended to correct the impression that Noel Coward invented the device.

PLAYGOER.

THE CASE AGAINST EINSTEIN.

SIR,—The excellent review of Dr. Arthur Lynch's *The Case Against Einstein* prompts me to raise an elementary but perhaps fundamental point.

Does the sum of the series $1 + \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{8} \dots$ equal exactly 2?

Does Achilles, in the problem of Zeno, ever catch up the tortoise?

Is .99999 . . . equal to exactly 1?

The intersection of two straight lines recedes as their inclination diminishes: when their inclination has

diminished to zero, is the point of intersection at an infinite distance?

Is a plane merely a portion of the surface of a sphere of infinite radius?

Does the graph of the hyperbola $xy=1$ cross the axes of x and y at infinity?

All these questions seem to involve the same "germinal idea"—the sum of an infinite series.

The problem of Achilles and the tortoise seems one which can be "referred to reality." In this problem, Achilles and a tortoise run a race, Achilles giving (say) 1 mile start but running (say) twice as fast as the tortoise: how far will Achilles have to run before (if ever) he catches up to the tortoise? Achilles having run the 1 mile start, the tortoise will then be $\frac{1}{2}$ mile ahead; Achilles having run this $\frac{1}{2}$ mile, the tortoise will then be $\frac{1}{4}$ mile ahead; and so on for ever. Thus, the total distance run by Achilles is $1 + \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4} \dots$. If the sum of this series never reaches 2, then Achilles never catches up to the tortoise. There are, of course, other presentations which avoid the difficulty, but I want to meet the difficulty and not avoid it.

I suggest that Achilles does reach the tortoise after running 2 miles; and that therefore $1 + \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4} \dots$ equals exactly 2; and proceeding further, that the answers to all the above questions are in the affirmative.

I am no philosopher. Would Dr. Arthur Lynch be good enough to explain?

HYPERBOLA.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD FEBRUARY 24, 1933.

THE President, Mr. C. Cohen, in the chair.

Also present: Messrs. Clifton, Wood, LeMaine, Ebury, Preece, McLaren, and the Secretary.

In opening the proceedings the Chairman, noting the small attendance, said it would have been excusable in such weather conditions if nobody had turned up to carry on the meeting.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and accepted, the Financial Statement, and Annual Dinner accounts were presented. New members were admitted to the Chester-le-Street, Birmingham, Birkenhead, Chester Branches, and the Parent Society. Permission was given for the formation of a Branch of the N.S.S. at Chester. A Report of the Annual Dinner was submitted, and it was agreed that the Annual Dinner for 1934 be held in the Holborn Restaurant. Under correspondence matters in connexion with Glasgow, Sunderland, Ashington Branches, and the International Freethought Federation, Bloemfontein, and offered advertising sites were dealt with. Instructions were given for the Secretary to proceed with arrangements for the Annual Conference to be held in London.

The Secretary reported progress in arrangements for the Social to take place on Saturday, April 1.

It was agreed the next Executive meeting be held on March 31.

The meeting then closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,

General Secretary.

Obituary.

MR. THOMAS NEWTON.

WE have to report with great regret the death of Mr. Thomas Newton, of Derby. Mr. Newton was a Freethinker of many years standing, a great admirer of the *Freethinker* and its present editor. During the time when Freethought propaganda was being carried on at Derby he took an active part in the work and gained the respect of all who knew him.

He was buried at Rostherne, Cheshire. Friends at a distance will please note.

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): 7.30, Annual General Meeting. Branch Members only.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road): 7.0, Ellen Wilkinson—"What I saw in India."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Prof. Lancelot Hogben, D.Sc.—"Religion a Private Affair?"

STUDY CIRCLE (N.S.S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, March 6, Mr. A. D. McLaren—"The Freethinkers Library."

THE CONWAY DISCUSSION CIRCLE (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 7.0, Tuesday, March 7, Kingsley Martin—"The Press and the Public."

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (City of London Hotel, 107 York Road, Camden Town, N.): 7.0, Dr. Arthur Lynch—"Science and Authority."

OUTDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Sunday, March 5, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. 3.0, Messrs. Bryant and A. D. Howell-Smith, B.A. 6.30, Messrs. Bryant, Tuson and Wood. The *Freethinker* and other Freethought literature can be obtained during and after the meetings, of Mr. Dunn, outside the Park in Bayswater Road.

WOOLWICH (Beresford Square): 7.45, Thursday, March 2, Messrs. Burke, Dossett and Smith. Beresford Square, 7.45, Sunday, March 5, Messrs. S. Burke, F. Dossett and F. W. Smith.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

ASHINGTON AND DISTRICT BRANCH N.S.S.—Wednesday, March 8, Mr. W. Morten—"Spiritualism."

BARNSELY N.S.S. (Miners' Hall, Huddersfield Road, Barnsley): 3.0, Mr. Chapman Cohen—"Looking for God." 7.0, "The Psychology of Belief."

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Engineers' Hall, Price Street, Birkenhead near Hamilton Square): 7.0, H. Little (Liverpool)—"Adolescence and Religion."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Bristol Street Schools): 7.0, Mr. A. C. White (Alan Handsacre)—"Church Revenues and National Welfare."

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Godwin Cafe, Godwin Street): 7.30, Mr. Sutherland—"Evolution of Religion." Members' Meeting at 7.0.

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. Jack Clayton—"Freethought and Morality."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (No. 2 Room, City Hall, Albion Street): 6.30, Mr. R. Stevenson—"Airy Realities."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, A Lecture.

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Islington, Liverpool, entrance in Christian Street): 7.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton (Chester-le-Street)—"Parsons, Politics and the People."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Engineers' Hall, Rusholme Road): 3.0, Mr. F. E. Monks (Manchester): A Lecture. 6.30, Mr. E. Piggott (Manchester Crematorium)—"Cremation."

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Hall No. 5, Plymouth Chambers, Drake Circus): 7.0, A Lecture.

RATIONALIST PRESS ASSOCIATION, GLASGOW DISTRICT (Central Hall, 25 Bath Street): 3.0, Mr. Joseph McCabe—"The Twilight of the Gods."

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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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