

# THE FREETHINKER

EDITED by CHAPMAN COHEN

— Founded 1881 —

Vol. LIII.—No. 49

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3, 1933

PRICE THREEPENCE

**PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.**

	Page
God and Evolution.—The Editor	777
The Usual Answers.—C. S. Fraser	779
The Raglan Rumpus.—Mimnermus	780
Annie Besant and Religion.—H. Cutner	781
Clerics as Freethought Propagandists.—A. H. Millward	782
Freethought and Political Science.—Austen Verney	786
The Cross of Calvary.—Ignotus	787
The Debate at Conway Hall.—H. Cutner	788
Tone.—R. S. N. Stoner	789

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

**Views and Opinions.**

**God and Evolution.**

Most of my readers will be familiar with the different stages in the history of the theory of evolution since the publication of *The Origin of Species*. Darwin's theory of natural selection was based upon two things. One was the infinite and indefinite variety of natural forms, a variation which extends to the most minute part of the animal structure. This variation was closely allied to the variation of which a breeder takes advantage when creating a new variety. The selective power of man is the obvious cause at work with domesticated animals, and Darwin sought for some corresponding factor in nature. He eventually found this in the tendency of all forms of life to outstrip the means of subsistence, and the resulting emergence of "favoured races" by means of natural selection. Both terms were open to objections; they were pictorial rather than precise. That, however, would not have mattered had evolutionists been dealing with honest truth-seeking men. As it happened, when it was found that evolution was an accepted fact with scientists, and that it was dangerous to oppose it, theologians discovered that evolution was God's method of working, and that his wisdom and his goodness were shown by designing a plan which led to the development of a higher form of existence.

Of course, this was just "bunk," since evolution does not of necessity lead to a "higher" form of life, and also because the active factor in evolution is not preservation but elimination. Animals are not preserved, they merely survive. It is the elimination of certain forms that is the vital and operative factor in Darwinian evolution. If there is a God at the back of the process, then it is a God always striving to kill, and permitting animals to live only so long as they are out of his reach.

Then there came a final, the present, stage, when "Natural Selection" as an adequate factor of organic evolution has been heavily discounted. Other factors,

some of which Darwin, in that great scientific turn of mind that was his allowed might be found to operate, are now considered to be of greater power, and the more ignorant and the more unscrupulous of the friends of God are announcing that the theory of evolution is discounted. That is, of course, sheer folly. Evolution is accepted by practically all scientists the world over. It is not the fact of evolution that is at all in question to-day, it is the precise machinery by which that evolution has been consummated.

\* \* \*

**Mind and Nature.**

A posthumous work by Dr. Ronald Campbell Macfie on *The Theology of Evolution*, has just been issued. I have not read it, nor judging from an outline of the work in the *Times Literary Supplement* am I likely to, since the price is 18s., which is rather too high a price for what it apparently contains. Dr. Macfie holds that natural selection is quite incompatible with belief in Christianity, and he, according to the reviewer, brings forward "an impressive array of arguments from eminent modern biologists who deny that the evolution of species has been brought about by the accumulation of small changes," and the reviewer gives the following from Dr. Macfie's work:—

The theory we have been propounding [he writes] is that a conscious, causal, psychical force of somewhat the same nature as our mind is as able spiritually, and mysteriously, and consciously to move and manipulate molecules, and micellae, and chromosomes in unconscious living matter as our mind is able spiritually and mysteriously and consciously to move and manipulate voluntary muscles (and through muscles directly or indirectly to move wheels and pistons)—our theory is that such a conscious, causal, psychical force collated and colligated the micellae of the first living cell (or cells) in such morphological and dynamical relationships as to produce automatic molecular changes, and yet at the same time left certain purposive sub-conscious functions in its own mento-volitional control, resembling the mento-volitional control we exercise over our own purposive actions.

Dr. Macfie is, it is to be noted, not an anti-evolutionist, he is merely an anti-Darwinian. He is arguing for something which he thinks will do duty for God, but which is certainly not the God of any religion that has ever existed, and which is as much like God as, to use Spinoza's simile, the animal that barks is like the dog-star. Its strength lies in its vagueness. It is quite a common attitude with those who have mastered a certain scientific jargon without understanding its implications, and who think that such phrases as "able spiritually and mysteriously" to do something is ever anything more than a verbose way of saying, "I don't know what the devil is happening or why the devil it happens, so, in the circumstances, let us put it down to God." I admit that this is a quite popular religious attitude, nowadays. Not

a new one because it is a standing rule with insurance companies and courts of law to put anything that occurs in an incalculable and non-reasonable and unexplainable manner down as an "act of God." It would be blasphemous to say that God acts in an idiotic manner, but it is quite religious to say that God does things which our reason cannot justify and our judgment naturally condemns.

\* \* \*

#### Pain and Providence.

Dr. Macfie is horrified at the picture of slaughter and suffering presented by Darwinian evolution. I agree that this is bad enough, and from the point of view of a believer in a God infinitely revolting. I do not agree that such suffering is incompatible with the existence of God, since if there is a God there is no reason that I can see why he should not be quite ready to inflict suffering on a nature-wide scale. The statement of the sentimental unbeliever, that if there is a God he must be good, is just sentimental slush, partly derived from religious influences called into being at a somewhat late stage of social development. People do not believe in a God because they are searching for goodness, and as a matter of fact, all the gods I have ever heard of have been rather worse than the best of their human contemporaries. Cruelty in nature is no argument whatever against the existence of a God, it is only a good reason for those who have the courage and intelligence neither to worship nor praise him. But men do not begin to praise God because they admire him, but merely because he is there, and will make himself very disagreeable if they do not. The fear of hell is always more powerful than the love of heaven, and gods who have neither the desire nor the power to make themselves very unpleasant, have about as much interest for men and women as a lottery would in which no prizes were distributed.

But Dr. Macfie does not, by the use of the tortuous verbosity in which he pleads for mind as a directing force in the "scheme of creation," get over the difficulty which Darwinism presents to him. The cruelty embodied in natural selection is not removed by assuming a mind directing the process, it merely gives it another form. For the fact of myriads of deaths following from the multiplication of life, and the fact of life, remains. There is undoubtedly a struggle to live going on in the animal world, even though that struggle may not be the condition of the perpetuation of new species. And the condition of survival must be either the superior strength of the survivor or the more fortunate situation of the survivor in relation to the food supply. Grant the existence of this inconceivable "psychical force" which retains a power of direction similar to the way in which our purposive actions are directed ("purposive" action does not, of necessity, imply what Dr. Macfie evidently thinks it does, as the experiments in conditioned reflexes prove) the fact of evolution, essentially a clumsy and wasteful process, remains. And it is evolution, not its cruelty alone that provides the objection to modern theism.

\* \* \*

#### The Irrelevancy of God.

If this "psychic force" is not itself a product of the evolutionary process, but something that precedes it and initiates it, why the need for evolution at all? Development is a fixed characteristic of human products, because the method here is inevitably that of trial and error, the accumulation of knowledge and experience to the problem in hand. But would any man be fool enough to pass through all the stages between the hand and horse-drawn vehicle and the mechanical vehicle if he could at the outset have manufactured the motor-car. Would man have progressed from the rough hut made from the branches

and stems of trees, if he could at once have made a modern scientifically planned house? What is the good of this "conscious, causal, psychical force" if in the end things can only behave and only develop as they would have done if this force had not existed?

The usual religious apology is that in spite of the suffering in nature, in spite of the apparent carelessness of life, the fact is that a "higher" form of life does eventuate. I pass the word "higher" as a mere question-begging word when applied to nature, but wonder what kind of an excuse the appearance of the "higher" type, can offer to the "lower" type that has disappeared. How does the emergence of Newton or Darwin, or Einstein compensate the Bushman and the Pygmy for being what they are? How does the emergence of a "higher" form of animal compensate the lower that has given way before it?

The truth is that in the world of nature there is not the slightest evidence, not the slightest indication that Einstein is of greater consequence than Hitler, or that the genius is of more account than the idiot. Worth in nature means no more than persistence, and the burglar—barring the efforts of the police—has as great a chance of living to a ripe old age as the philanthropist. Neither intellectual ability nor moral worth, other things equal, can offer a guarantee of long life or of a numerous progeny. Suffering may teach, but that is because it is just another example of the method of trial and error, and even then it is not those who suffer who always profit from their pain. The onlooker is just as likely as not to benefit. It is a fact that merit bears small relation to worth, and those on whose experience the "better state" of the human world is built frequently reap no benefit whatever from the experience through which they have passed.

It was never a knowledge of the normal natural processes that suggested a God, but the absence of that knowledge. The saner view of nature than that suggested by Dr. Macfie was given by the late W. H. Mallock:—

The truth is that if we consider the universe as a whole, it fails to suggest a conscious and purposive God at all; and it fails to do so, not because the processes of evolution as such preclude the idea that a God might not have made use of them for a definite purpose, but because when we come to consider these processes in detail, and view them in the light of the only process they suggest, we find them to be such that a God who could have been guilty of them would be a God too absurd, too monstrous, too mad to be credible.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

#### THE STREAM OF LIFE.

Although science gives no hint of or support for the survival of man after death, that is, personal survival, as man or "spirit," it affords a much finer impetus to happiness and service than any metaphysical or theological idea of rewards and punishments in an "after-life." There is a short passage in *The Science of Life* (Wells, Huxley and Wells) in which this nobler concept is suggested. "Our lives do not begin afresh at birth, and do not end inconclusively; they take up a physical inheritance, they take over a tradition, they enter into a set drama, they are conditioned from the outset, and each has a role to play, different from any role that has ever been played before or will ever be played again. And our lives do not end with death; they stream on, not merely in direct offspring, but more importantly perhaps in the influence they have had on the rest of life. According to the playing of the role the unending consequences are determined. They endure in the fabric of things accomplished for ever. This is not theory or speculation; it is as much a statement of fact as that every stream which flows upon this planet earth flows down towards the sea." (p. 853.)

## The Usual Answers.

ANYONE who is enterprising enough to discuss the topic of religion with his fellow-beings is sure to be rewarded. The reward will seldom take the form of bouquets or compliments. As often as not it will be accompanied by open disapproval, which sometimes may develop into vilification, abuse or even slander. Whether the risk of such consequences is worth while must be left to the judgment of the individual. But whatever the consequences may be, the clash of opinion which results from religious discussion cannot but sharpen one's powers of reasoning and give one a fresh insight into human mentality. It will never add to one's respect for the effects of religious teaching upon human character or intellect.

One peculiar result of such discussions is to emphasize the sameness of the answers given to arguments against the existence of God and the supernatural. The particular wording of these answers will, of course, vary in many instances. But, shorn of their distinctive trimmings, we are left with about half-a-dozen at most. Let us, therefore, examine a few of those which are most commonly encountered.

(1) "Look at the beauties and wonders of nature! There must be *something* behind it all."

This, of course, is what the high-brows call "The Argument from Design," converted into popular phraseology. But to anyone whose mind has matured beyond the age of ten years, the extraordinary childishness of this argument must be crystal clear. Yet it is surprising how many apparently intelligent people still make use of it.

The first point to note is this. Because there are beauties and wonders in nature, we are expected to agree that the "something behind" it is also beautiful and wonderful. The next point to note is that we are expected to give this "something behind" the name of "God." And lastly we are expected to respect, nay, even to worship, this "something behind" or else to lie under the suspicion of being cranks or criminals if we fail to do so.

When we point out that diseases, deformities, accidents, famines, plagues, cataclysms and all the other horrors of nature are as much a part of the whole as its beauties and wonders, we are met either with disgruntled silence or else with some counter-statement as unintelligent as the original one.

Now if "God" is the only "something behind" nature, then it is clear that he must be behind its unpleasant features as well as its pleasant. In this case why should the Atheist be condemned for refusing to respect, much less worship, such a thing? On the other hand, if "God" is not the only "something behind" the horrors of nature, then there must be something else—perhaps even several other "something else"—or these several other "something else"—must be fully equal in power to "God." For they carry out their horrible work with as much impunity and with as obvious results as "God." So it would appear that, with at least two such powers behind nature, it is a trifle inconsistent to lavish all respect upon one alone. Possibly if a little less time were spent in adulation of "God," and a little more in flattery and propitiation of the "something else," the effect upon nature as a whole might be more agreeable to us humans. Unfortunately it is only so-called "savages" who are consistent in this respect, and who devote their religious attention to both sorts of "something behind."

The trouble is that all God-believers are shocked at the suggestion that anything else can be equal in power to their special divinity. Indeed they

assert that he is not merely the creator of all nature, and therefore "behind" all its aspects, but they assert further that he is all-good and all-powerful. And this results in such odd remarks as that the unpleasant events in nature are "God's ways of reminding us of his existence"! Or, alternatively, that "God has given the Devil (which is their name for the "something else") a temporary power in the world."

If either of these statements be true, then it is a rank impossibility to make God's omnipotence tally with his all-goodness; unless, of course, language is nonsense and words can mean two different things at the same time. The "beautiful" design of God's creation begins to look decidedly messy! His omnipotence becomes impotence; and his all-goodness takes on a muddy shade of part-badness. What, for instance, would one think of an all-powerful friend who reminded us of his existence by bashing our heads with a rock, or by sticking germ-infested pins into us! Or even of one who did not do this himself, but allowed one of his servants to do the same sort of thing.

The God-believers reply to this is always the same. "God's ways are mysterious!" Oh, how they do love that word "mystery," these muddle-pated worshippers of ignorance. Any absurdity, any contradiction, any futility in argument or fact is swallowed as the gilded pill of "mystery" if it relates to that vague "something behind" which they call "God." In no other sphere of thought except religion is such nonsense tolerated for a moment.

To the Atheist there is nothing mysterious about a raging toothache, a twisted spine, or a landslide that overwhelms a whole village of 489 inhabitants, men, women, children and babes alike. (This occurred at Goldau in Switzerland in 1806.) Nor is there anything mysterious in the fact that certain aspects of nature are considered to be beautiful or wonderful. Nor that what may be beautiful, or fortunate, for some persons can be ugly, or unlucky, for others. For the Atheist realizes that beauty and ugliness, good and evil, are merely relative terms which vary according to circumstances; and that "God," and "the Devil" are fictions of the human brain inherited from a dim past when men knew less about the causes of certain phenomena than they know now.

What is strange, however, is that persons who profess to be intelligent and are, in fact, intelligent in other spheres of thought, should abandon their intelligence when they come to apply their reasoning to beliefs which they have been forced to swallow "at their mother's knee." Yet, when we realize that this "God" idea is just the very one which is acquired at an age when most people are too young to do anything but believe what they are told, then even this strange behaviour begins to be understandable. For it is well-known that the most difficult thing in the world is to rid oneself of prejudices and habits of thought instilled during childhood.

Unfortunately these antique superstitions and old-wives' tales about gods, devils, angels and other imaginary creatures, are not limited in their effects to the individual. It is, indeed, bad enough that they warp the intelligence of children to such an extent as to affect their adult judgment in later years. But when it is realized that these beliefs are tied up to moral standards that are pitifully out of date, the cumulative effect upon the society which accepts them is tragic. Furthermore, when we begin to notice that behind all this irrational thinking and twisted morality there flourishes a vast army of parasites, whose aim is to advertise and perpetuate these absurdities for their own benefit, it behoves all who have come to their senses to do their utmost to expose this rotten

hoax upon humanity. For as long as it profits priests, parsons and pastors to batten upon the lies which they so sedulously preach, so long will humanity suffer under the triple curse of ignorance, credulity and bigotry.

No one denies that there may be a few uneducated ministers of religion who are sincere in their belief that without these supernatural fantasies morality would go to the dogs. But their fears are quite unfounded and utterly contradicted by experience. No one denies that there are ministers of religion who genuinely wish to improve the morality of their flocks. But the Atheist firmly denies that any consistent standard of morality can be based upon beliefs that are inconsistent and self-contradictory; and he asserts that in any case morality has nothing to do with the so-called "supernatural." Moreover, he declares, with the evidence of all history to back him, that it is positively immoral to preach as truth what has not been and cannot be proved true.

"Look at the beauties and wonders of nature!" Yes, look and take your fill. But why remain blind to its horrors and evils? What is rugged grandeur to the tourist is a horrible eyesore to the local inhabitant. A wonderful view to some is a mere monotony to others. A feast to the locust is a plague to the farmer. A painful death to one creature is a victory or a pleasant meal for another. And so on through the whole gamut of nature which, apart from human judgment, is morally and æsthetically neutral.

"There must be something behind it all." Yes, of course, there is—if by "something" we mean some cause or causes. And the "something behind" all these relative aspects of nature is nothing more nor less than our common-or-garden human preferences and dislikes. These, in their turn, differ in each individual according to his inherited and acquired characteristics; and they vary according to the circumstances of time and place. If these be "God," then "God" is human.

C. S. FRASER.

## The Raglan Rumpus.

"If all religions but one are certainly wrong, what is the chance of one being certainly right?"

G. W. Foote.

"There is nothing else in history but the fight between freedom and tyranny."—Arnold White.

THE sycophantic qualities of British newspapers has never been displayed to greater advantage than in the case of Lord Raglan's recent criticism of some Biblical characters. Editors, like flunkeys, dearly love a lord, and here was a nobleman who was daredevil enough to use the language of pure iconoclasm. The newspapers revelled in it, and his lordship was accorded the honours of bold headlines, and much editorial comment. The publicity campaign was passing wonderful, and only paralleled by that accorded to a cinema-favourite on her twelfth matrimonial venture, or the discovery that the Queen of the Sandwich Islands took two lumps of sugar with her tea.

Lord Raglan merely expressed the sensible view that religious teaching was out-of-date and required drastic revision. The same thing has been said for generations by Freethinkers. It has been repeated in this journal every week for over fifty years. But the lick-spittle press gave rare or no publicity to the matter until a member of what Shelley called the "illustrious obscure" class ventured to affirm the undeniable. It constitutes a most searching criticism of the British press, and serves to show the real

reason why newspapers no longer direct public opinion, nor seem to be aware of the intellectual movement that is going on, not only in this country, but in all the nations of the civilized world.

The criticism of Lord Raglan was directed against such Old Testament characters as "Moses," "Joshua," "Samuel," and "David," whom he unequivocally described as "monsters of cruelty." This fluttered the journalistic dovescotes, and many editors professed to be shocked by the exposure. The *New-  
Chronicle* (London) which caters for the Nonconformists and Fancy Religionists, had to call in Professor Julian Huxley to explain the situation, and also employed a sob-stuff evangelist to reply to the professor, which he promptly did with much emotion and many tears, parading ignorance as the height of knowledge.

Professor Huxley scored one good point, when he pointed out that the New Testament, no less than the earlier books of the Christian Bible, was equally open to hostile criticism. He instanced the teaching of Saint Paul, with his low and degrading view of marriage and his insistence on regarding women as "the weaker vessel." The professor might have gone further, and instanced the horrible dogma of eternal damnation, which is the foulest blot in the alleged later revelation. There is nothing so terrible in the Old Testament itself, although its pages are full of horrors. Even Christians are getting ashamed of it. Lord Westbury, years ago, in the matter of *Essays and Reviews*, whilst addressing the jury, uttered the weighty and memorable words! "Gentlemen, your verdict kills the Devil and puts out hell-fire." The verdict of the jury of the entire civilized and educated world is now dead against Satan and his flaming abode. This is a verdict that brings relief and delectation to all except those reactionaries who use the lever of fear that they may exploit their more innocent brethren. It does not materially affect the final issue that the Greek and Romish Churches, the two oldest churches of Christendom, still preach a literal hell, or that the flat-chested warriors of the Salvation Army still attempt to flame hell over their devotees in order to attract pence to their tambourines.

This matter raises once more the question, not only of the value of the alleged high spiritual and moral tone of the Christian Religion, but also of the conduct of Christians themselves. In controversy with Freethinkers it is the fashion for the champions of Orthodoxy to explain, smilingly, that in attacking the barbaric doctrine of hell-fire the Intellectuals are but wasting their time in flogging a dead horse. That quadruped, however, has a distressing habit of resurrecting, and that there is plenty of kick left in that ancient animal is abundantly demonstrated by the literature issued for the benefit of innocent believers, and also in that published for the alleged instruction of the young.

Freethinkers who imagine that one of the oldest and most barbarous religious dogmas is losing its hold on the national mind because the clergy appear to be giving the old, bad, savage ideas faint support in their public and pulpit utterances will do well to remember that, while the objectionable dogmas are still taught, the protests of the humanitarians are sought to be severely boycotted. Wherever the Christian clergy retain anything of their former power they still preach a hell of literal fire. The Romish Church has never damped one solitary spark of this fiery damnation for sinners. The High Church section of the Anglican Church holds forth on brimstone, and the Church Army is as insistent as its older rival, the Salvation Army, on the value of a post-mortem red-hot-poker department as an aid to subscribers.

This constant harping on the horrors of eternal damnation, this gloating on hell, this insistence on the sufferings of Christ, are simple morbidity and symptoms of unbalanced minds. Far otherwise did the great Pagans teach. "Why should men fear death?" said Epictetus proudly, "for where death is, there are we not; and where we are, there death is not." Marcus Aurelius, at all times taught the virtue of equanimity. Hear what Gotama Buddha said, as rendered by Edwin Arnold:—

"Pray not! the darkness will not brighten! Ask  
Nought from the silence, for it cannot speak!  
Vex not your mournful minds with pious pains!  
Ah! brothers, sisters, seek  
Nought from the helpless gods by gift and hymn,  
Nor bribe with blood, nor feed with fruit and cakes;  
Within yourselves deliverance must be sought,  
Each man his prison makes."

Indeed, how small, mean, and even contemptible such a creed as the Christian Religion appears after all in comparison with the Great Pagan philosophies. Were these wise, old Ancients to reappear upon the earth and see great modern nations openly professing to believe in hell, devils, and eternal torture; they would wonder what blight had fallen upon the human intellect after the lapse of so many centuries.

So far as this country is concerned, the explanation is that the Christian priests have control of education in the universities and public schools, and half the elementary schools of the nation. This country is not educated, not even half-educated. This was proved beyond all cavil and dispute during the last great war when the letters of the millions of soldiers and sailors were read for censorship purposes, and also by the huge sale of charms, amulets, and religious emblems, which their innocent bearers fondly hoped would ward off hostile bullets, or prevent the wearers from drowning. Church schools are the worst staffed and the worst equipped in the whole country. Priests do not care a pin for real education. All they desire is to impress their own peculiar theological views on the youth of the country during their most impressionable years. By doing so, they ensure respect for their sorry profession as a sacred caste apart, and guarantee their very comfortable existence for yet another generation.

What education actually means to priests may be seen by the bare fact that in 1870 the State had to rescue this country from the dangers of sheer illiteracy and abysmal ignorance. The introduction of free and compulsory education has since been heavily handicapped by the constant interference of the clergy. Their continued association with education is purely mischievous, for their prime motive is to perpetuate ancient errors, and thus ensure their own well-being and comfort.

Human nature does not need a fetich-book nor a sacred caste apart to teach it how to live. It needs to be freed from the shackles of priestly control, and it will then adjust itself naturally to the real conditions of life. Although no ideal perfection may ever be reached, men and women will be all the happier for having escaped the control of a parasitical caste apart, who are at present usurping a position in the body politic for which they have no qualifications except unbounded assurance and conceit. Speaking at Lawrence College, Ramsgate, recently, the present Archbishop of Canterbury confessed that he had neglected the study of science all his life. This is true of the vast majority of the clergy. They are not really educated, but only educated in the patter of their sorry profession. Yet they control education in this country with an iron hand.

MIMNERMUS.

## Annie Besant and Religion.

(Concluded from page 757.)

### IV.

THENCEFORTH she was heart and soul for Theosophy. The death of Bradlaugh and that of Madame Blavatsky took place in the same year. Mrs. Besant and W. Q. Judge and Col. Olcott became the leaders of the Society in England, America and India, and if the reader wants a detailed account of the early years of Mrs. Besant's Theosophical career, I know of no better work than *Isis Very Much Unveiled*. It made all England rock with laughter and should have killed Theosophy. But ridicule did not kill the Salvation Army or Christian Science and the Theosophical Society survived far more withering attacks. I am not particularly concerned, however, with it, and its inner history would require a volume to itself. But for Annie Besant, it was a vehicle for study as well as command. The "hidden" side of religion was what she was now interested in and she devoted all her undoubted talent to its investigation. She was forced to agree that the famous Mahatma letters which she imagined were "precipitated" to her as they had been to Mme. Blavatsky from Thibet had really been written by Judge, and she had to admit also that morally the famous Churchman and co-Theosophist, C. W. Leadbeater, was not all that could be desired. She had to bear some bitter attacks particularly when she tried to "improve" the second edition of the *Secret Doctrine* by adding this and subtracting that. To tamper with the original "gospel" was more than sacrilege and one of "H.P.B.'s" pupils, Alice Leighton Cleather, published a pamphlet which puts Mrs. Besant in a very sorry light. In particular, it proves that whether Mme. Blavatsky was right or wrong, Mrs. Besant made an awful hash of her teaching.

Putting aside then, the hundred and one books and pamphlets she wrote on Theosophy and its various aspects—many of which, it may be added, differed from the original version—I think a representative work on her religious ideas and conclusions is *Esoteric Christianity*. I do not think she departed from what she laid down in this book very much. And it does not matter if she did. It is here we find how supremely her Freethought asserts itself in spite of her adherence. Her familiarity with the work of Robert Taylor, Dupuis, Godfrey Higgins and many other of the early Freethinkers who saw in Christianity mostly a re-hash or new rendering of old myths, and who proved that God's only precious revelation to mankind had sun-myth, phallic worship and ignorance as a base, came here in good stead.

Of course, she had reached the stage when, like other religious believers, she insisted that religion was an absolute necessity for "the people." But there were two sides to religion. On the one hand, were the "outward" historical facts, the plain unvarnished history which the ordinary man could understand just as he understood the story of Sinbad or Red Riding Hood or Alfred and the burning cakes. On the other hand, there was the esoteric side, the "mysteries," revealed only to the initiate, to holy men and women by special teachers. You had to be in the "inner circle" to receive this marvellous teaching or to put the matter into Biblical language, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine." (Matt. vii. 6.)

The *Secret Doctrine* only revealed part of the esotericism of religion, just as the *Kabbala* of the

Jews reveals only part of the holy mysteries of the Jewish faith. "The true archaic wisdom," says Mrs. Besant, "of the Hebrews remains in the guardianship of a few of the true sons of Israel."

Personally, I think she makes out a good case for these "hidden mysteries." She divided the people who have studied religion and its origins into Comparative Mythologists and Comparative Religionists. She says:—

Both base their answers on a common basis of admitted facts. Research has indisputably proved that the religions of the world are markedly similar in their main teachings, in their possession of founders who display superhuman powers and extraordinary moral elevation, in their ethical precepts, in their use of means to come into touch with invisible worlds and in the symbols by which they express their leading beliefs. This similarity, amounting in many cases to identity, proves—according to the above schools—a common origin. But on the nature of this common origin, the two schools are at issue. The Comparative Mythologists contend that the common origin is the common ignorance, and that the loftiest religious doctrines are simply refined expressions of the crude and barbarous guesses of savages, of primitive men, regarding themselves and their surroundings. Animism, fetishism, nature-worship, sun-worship—these are the constituents of the primeval mud, out of which has grown the splendid lily of religion. A Krishna, a Buddha, a Lao-tze, a Jesus, are the highly-civilized but lineal descendants of the whirling medicine-man of the savage. God is a composite photograph of the innumerable Gods who are the personifications of the forces of nature.

Mrs. Besant was not a comparative Mythologist. She belonged to those who believe "that all religions originate from the teachings of Divine men. . . . The savage religions are degenerations, the results of decadence. . . . The great teachers form an enduring Brotherhood of men and 'Religions are branches from a common trunk—Divine Wisdom.'"

It is impossible to compress *Esoteric Christianity*—nearly 400 pages of closely reasoned matter—into a few lines. It can be thus dismissed, of course, but so can the great mass of Christian literature. But for the student anxious to study the origins of religion, anxious to understand the hold it still has over people's minds and actions, the work of any writer deeply immersed in similar problems must be of interest. For Mrs. Besant, there was a fundamental difference between Jesus the man, and Christ the great Teacher and Initiate; and those who are interested in the "occult" or feel that therein may be traced the whole mystery of religion will find *Esoteric Christianity* a mine of information, gleaned not only from its author's long contact with Freethought, but from long and arduous study of everything "esoteric" Mrs. Besant could lay her hands upon. The ease with which she marshals her material and the confidence with which she presents it as the real solution of all religious difficulties about "true" Christianity are thoroughly characteristic. She was always right; never a doubt assailed her; it hardly ever did during the whole of her life on any particular issue she was dealing with.

Religion certainly dominated Annie Besant throughout her long career. She came to believe almost everything one can possibly believe, and if religion really can make man happy and contented, then she must have been the happiest woman alive. Was she? Did she radiate her own happiness? Was all she worked for in Theosophy so much greater than the Secularism she disdainfully rejected over forty years ago? Is the lifting of "the Veil that

hides the Virgin of Eternal Truth" so much greater than the work required to make man happy here and new on this old Earth of ours? Is not the Secularism of Charles Bradlaugh a thousand times more worthy of emulation than the Theosophical "mysteries" of Annie Besant?

H. CUTNER.

## Clerics as Freethought Propagandists.

A BRADLAUGH REMINISCENCE.

THE recent passage at arms between Mr. Chapman Cohen and the Rev. Gilesa Salisbury recalls an outstanding incident in my life which may be of interest at this time of Bradlaugh memories. I was then a young man of about nineteen, and the fierce orthodoxy of Primitive Methodism in which I had been saturated was being undermined by a little scientific study and thinking.

I happened to come across a copy of the *National Reformer*, in which there appeared an "Open Letter" to the Rev. Canon Fergie, Vicar of Ince, near Wigan. It was a scathing exposure by Bradlaugh of a vile lie based upon a modicum of truth—"ever the worst of lies." The Vicar had written, in the organ of the Church Pastoral Aid Society, an article entitled "The Rotten Plank," and had described the adventures of a young man of his parish, who, after hearing "Iconoclast" lecture, had forsaken the Church, had taken to Sabbath-breaking and had met with a visitation from an avenging God—but in his dying moments had made his last confession and received the holy sacrament. Fortunately, the Vicar, in his zeal for the Faith, had so elaborated the story with details that Bradlaugh was able to make definite investigations. These did not cease until, by the aid of the local register of deaths, he had identified the young man concerned and was able to publish the full details. These appeared in the *National Reformer* for the years 1886 and 1887. As it proved to be a milestone in my life the article lives with me, and I can almost see the bold outline of Bradlaugh's words in print as I write.

Perhaps I acted with the imprudence of youth, but the abominable tampering with the truth stung me to the quick. I told my orthodox father—local preacher, class leader, and all the rest—that I had read something which had greatly impressed me—could I read it out to him? And I proceeded to read the "Rotten Plank" story, which Bradlaugh had given in detail, my father being much moved during the reading. At its conclusion he said, "I thank God, my boy, that He sent that message to you." I replied, "Wait a minute, Dad, I haven't finished"—and proceeded to read Bradlaugh's letter in full.

It was the final break, shortly after that I left my orthodox home for good. I was at that time an Associate Member of the Y.M.C.A., having resigned full membership on account of my heterodox views. Though still a Theist I was far from being an orthodox Christian, and did not like sailing under false colours. But I did not resign altogether, as I liked meeting my chums in the reading and play-rooms. One day, a little later than the incident already narrated, I saw on the mantleshelf of the reading-room, for free distribution, a number of copies of the Church Pastoral Aid Society's publication, with special attention directed to the "Rotten Plank" story. I flared up, and told the fellows in the room what I knew about it—walked out and never again entered the Y.M.C.A.

These incidents of nearly fifty years ago, will perhaps account for the indelible impression that the article made on my mind. It may be that I owe a great deal to the Rev. Canon Fergie, Vicar of Ince near Wigan. Perhaps, also, the Rev. Gilesa Salisbury has similarly conferred a benefit upon some impressionable young man and rendered, inadvertently, service to the cause of truth and honesty.

A. H. MILLWARD.

## Acid Drops.

A big book on Jesus has just been written by Mr. D. Merezhkovsky. It is called, *The Unknown Jesus*, and is, we understand, full of facts about Jesus hitherto unknown to the million or two previous biographers. Then Mr. Basil Matthews has written a *Little Life of Jesus*, specially for children, and it actually takes for granted that they have not heard of Jesus before. Naturally this life is also packed with facts. Mr. Robert Bird has also added his *Jesus, the Carpenter of Nazareth* to the other world-famous biographies; and in case these are not quite good enough, the Bishop of Chelmsford has written another life. He claims to "bring the Divine Story near home, and to break down that feeling so often embedded in children's minds, that the Gospel happenings are aloof from their lives." Dear, dear. Fancy a child actually imagining that Jesus walking on water, or stopping a storm, or flying to heaven, was something "aloof" from his own life. We hope the perspicacious Bishop will succeed but—what a farce it all is!

Christmas, of course, sees the usual crop of stories from the Bible written specially for—and down to—children, and it is interesting to note how even such a semi-orthodox review as the *Times Literary Supplement* has to protest at the fatuous unctiousness of many of these books. Some of its criticisms damn them with faint, very faint praise. Speaking of the Bishop's book about Jesus mentioned above, the reviewer says, "when the author is speaking in his own person he might surely refrain from such a phrase as, 'the winsomeness of His Personality which when applied to Christ is grating to some of us,'" and "the frontispiece, a palely coloured picture of 'The Carpenter,' is only too much in keeping with the phrase." Poor Bishop!

The *Sunday Dispatch* prints a long article on "Does Religion Spoil your Chance in Life?" which, whether the writer means it to be so, or not, is highly entertaining. He explains quite lucidly why all the promised revivals of religion are not coming off. What has first and foremost to be "got over" is that the belief in God spells material benefit. Get the public to "eat" that idea and the Revival is as good as here.

Mr. William Carrick, the propounder of this thesis, tells us that he pulled along without God for some years, but was not happy. Then he "recognized" that there was a God and *his material affairs prospered*. These are not our italics, mark you, but Mr. William Carrick's. To those who ask him for proof for his belief, he refers them to his italics and proffers no other. "What is the outstanding fact about the lives of successful men?" he asks. Almost all are religious:—

Carnegie read his Bible, the old J. P. Morgan went regularly to his Church, Rockefeller loves to address a Bible Class, Ford is a pious man, the Cadburys are distinguished Quakers, Lord Beaverbrook turns his Sunday evening parties into services of song, Joseph Rank—said to be the richest man in Britain now—is an ardent Wesleyan. . . . I can assert without blasphemy that not only is it possible to be religious and successful, but religious faith help towards success. And probably is a condition of it.

Godliness is profitable unto all things. (1 Tim. iv. 8.)

We know a little about modern journalism, so will not assume rashly that there is any such person as Mr. William Carrick. But we know something as well of the "spirituality" of Christendom, and we know that whoever wrote this article is on a "winner." It was not the intrinsic merits of the Gospel that sent it to the remote corners of the earth. It was the belief—based upon something much more substantial than the thirty-nine articles—that trade followed the Cross. The only fault with Mr. Carrick's method is that he is much too barefaced about it. When he has learnt to wrap it up in spiritual and hypocritical jargon, there is no reason why he shouldn't pick up the shoes and robe of Mr. Buchman with substantial hope of success.

God's ways, of course, are not our ways—that is one of the first conclusions come to by theologians after studying Hebrew and Greek manuscripts—but if we were only favoured with the President's seat in Olympus for a fortnight all the plagues which infested Job and relatively inoffensive men would "for a limited period only" be diverted towards this Carrickian blend of pecuniary piety.

Mr. Belloc thinks there is only one organization which can prevent war in the near future. It is the Roman Catholic Church. Well, why doesn't it? Why does it not insist that all Roman Catholic countries should immediately disarm, that all Roman Catholic citizens should become pacifists, and that all Roman Catholic armament firms should give up business or sell only holy crosses in future? Some start should be made, and if Mr. Belloc really believes his Church can stop war, let it make a start. Why not commence with the resignations of all Roman Catholic priests as chaplains in all the armies to which they are now appointed? Why not devote some of the immense funds which his Church holds towards anti-war propaganda? Why does not Mr. Belloc himself go to Poland and inveigh against war there—or even in Ireland? He claims that the Church is left out in all anti-war discussions, but why should it be? Perhaps what Mr. Belloc really wants is a sort of universal conversion to Romanism; but any knowledge of history should make that kind of thing impossible again. We know too much about the Roman Catholic Church.

The problem of the empty City Churches can be solved very easily, says a woman correspondent to one of the daily papers. Simply appoint *women* preachers and the pews will be crowded. Perhaps. It's a very good idea, but does it not depend on the women? A sweet young thing, with a lovely face and voice, might crowd a church, but supposing the lady was fat and fifty? Besides would it be religion or sex?

Dean Inge asserts that recovery from the age of bad taste is in progress. We shouldn't care to deny it, the fact is so obvious. For instance, the working man no longer dons a gloomy suit of Sabbath black on Sundays. Gone are the ugly pious coloured lithographs from most homes. Dreary dirges have ceased to be ground out on the harmonium in the vast majority of houses. The horrible doctrine of eternal damnation and hell-fire has become abhorrent to the improved taste of the "new pagans" of to-day. Indeed, we might say that there is no lack of evidence as to the truth of the Dean's assertion. So we may hazard the opinion that the advent of Secularism—which the dear clergy heartily condemn—has done this country at least one good turn, if it has revealed the badness of the taste of a former pious age.

Readers of this paper are already acquainted with Queen Victoria's reference to ". . . Mr. Bradlaugh," brought to the light of day in Mr. Guedalla's *The Queen and Mr. Gladstone*. Mr. Guedalla has apparently had some little trouble in handling that lady's expressive adjectives. On page 167 in a private letter we find the excerpt from one of her letters: "The . . . cruelty of these . . . Boers." It is a pity that Mr. Guedalla's discretion has robbed us of these expletives. They would have, no doubt, gladdened the heart of the late Lord Birkenhead, and the *Catholic Herald* would have been particularly appreciative.

The reference to the Boers induces a few reflections. What a pity that just once or twice in our rough island story we have not been able to be at war with gentlemen. Then we should have had a sportsman's war. Equal numbers on each side, engagements starting at an arranged hour, no surprises, sorties, and snipings; and inscribed on the banners the words, "May the best man win!" It has not pleased the Lord so far to vouchsafe to us any war except with savages. Can we wonder there-

fore that other nations have not learnt to play the war-game prettily, when they have been deprived of the benefit of our example?

It is even the same in sport. Take the case of cricket, down under. When our opponents really *feel* they are up against gentlemen, they become quite ill-mannered.

The personal visits of Our Lady to various people in Belgium are being multiplied to such an extent that Cardinal Van Roey and other members of the Belgian Hierarchy have issued a letter warning the clergy that some of the "apparitions" may not be actually authentic. This is really too bad. Here is a series of genuine visitations to specially selected and extremely pious Roman Catholics. The events have exactly the same true ring of authenticity that surrounded similar happenings at Lourdes, and now some of the upper hierarchy are beginning to be as incredulous as mere Freethinkers. Perhaps the cash part of the transactions has not found its way altogether into the Church's coffers, but is being held back by the fortunate people who have seen the Virgin. Or perhaps the blessed Cardinal thinks a lot of—well, lies are being circulated. But whatever the reason or reasons, the clergy are warned that any funds collected for pious objects or books or pamphlets sold relating to the Visitations are very, very suspect at Headquarters. It is all too sad for words.

From the New York *Truthseeker* :—

A touch of religion added to a harmless dementia produces this headline in the New York *Herald Tribune* : "Farmer 'Gets Religion,' Slays Two and Ends Life. 'Converted' at Revival, Frenzied Missourian Shoots Three." The farmer was Harry Ager, fifty-seven years old. He had attended a religious camp-meeting, where he experienced conversion, and was to have been baptized the next day, when with a shotgun he killed a neighbour and son and wounded a son, before setting fire to a barn and making a burnt offering of himself. Without prejudice to rival insanities, we offer the comment that religious excitement produces deeds of this kind more frequently than any other form of delusion.

In a Nonconformist paper a reader declares he attaches little importance to the League of Nations as a preventative of war. His hope is "that Christians shall recognize the spiritual fact of brotherhood." What a hope! To him, apparently, the history of nineteen centuries of the Christian conduct generally, conveys no lesson. Nineteen centuries of talk about Christian brotherhood and love. And nineteen centuries of a succession of wars. When there were not wars that employed armaments, there were wars of another kind—disputes and wrangles among Christians concerning the exact meaning of the "spiritual facts" of the Religion of Brotherhood and Love. What a hope!

It seems to be getting quite common for writers in Christian papers to-day to admit sorrowfully that the Christian Church and Christians have in the past been guilty of some rather awful misdeeds. We notice that the aforesaid writers never give any assurance that the Church and its followers will not commit similar crimes in the future. The point that these apologizers conveniently overlook is that the misdeeds, the crimes against humanity, are the direct result of the influence of religious ideas. The excuse often made is that the Christian criminals had a false conception of the Christian religion. If such is the case, what is the advantage of being, as is claimed, under the direct guidance of the Christian God? If heavenly inspiration is unable to prevent wrong conceptions of the "one true religion" from being held—and thus prevent the crimes that result from them—what good is it at all? The evil deeds of Christians under the influence of their religious beliefs and their God's inspiration have been so frightful, that there is never any danger of Man without religion and without divine inspiration surpassing, or even equalling, the Christian achievements.

The Rev. George Jackson, a Methodist writer, thinks that the talk about "empty churches" is greatly overdone. He asserts that the worshipping habit has dug itself deep into human life, because "the instinct for worship lies deep in man's human make-up." Well, if it is true that, as has been recently asserted, there are 44 millions of people in Great Britain and only four millions attend churches, the "worshipping habit" would appear to have no relation to any human instinct, but is merely a bad habit which 40 millions have out-grown, and four millions have not. And we wonder how long the habit would endure if the many thousands of priests and parsons ceased telling people—from the cradle to the grave—that they *ought* to worship? It would be truer to say that the inculcation of the worshipping habit lies deep in the parson's instinct of self preservation.

We are surprised to find Christians are very anxious about the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, which is in danger of collapse. One distinguished engineer thinks an extra strong puff of wind will blow it away, and although the walls have been shored up with timber, they are quite unfit for the purpose. But surely, even if the wind did blow down the Church, a whiff of Almighty breath could blow it all back again? We refuse to believe that Jesus, anyway, would allow such a piece of awful sacrilege as its collapse to take place, as this Church is on the site of, or contains, the Holy Sepulchre, surely the most venerated object in the world. Why, oh why, are modern Christians men of such little faith?

Answering Lord Halifax's call for "Unity," the English Church Union and the Anglo-Catholic Congress—two bodies with very little love for each other up till recently—have decided to unite, if at all possible, with the noble lord as President. In the meantime, quite a number of other Christian bodies ridicule the idea of "unity." For example, Sir A. Hazlerigg, Lord Lieutenant of the County of Leicester, has been comparing "the Catholic clergy to drunk and disorderly persons in the public streets," and he declared also that "the senseless ceremonies, and sometimes the way the clergy behave, not only in the churches, but in the cathedrals, of our land, drive me to the utmost limit of my endurance." Possibly the Lord-Lieutenant is beginning to realize that the silly antics of priests in petticoats in church have a remarkable likeness to the savage—and funny—antics of negro witch-doctors. At all events, they both start from the same premises.

### Fifty Years Ago.

THE cursing of the barren fig-tree is termed by Woolston, "such an absurd, foolish and ridiculous, if not malicious and ill-natured act in Jesus, that I question whether for folly and absurdity it can be equalled in any instance of the life of a reputed wise man." St. Augustine very plainly says that this act, upon the supposition that it was done, was a foolish one. To curse the fig-tree because one is hungry and vexed, was as foolish and passionately done as for another man to throw the chairs and stools about the house because his dinner is not ready. If he was of power to provide bread for others on a sudden, he might surely have supplied his own necessities and so have kept his temper. But what is yet worse, the time of figs was not yet when Jesus looked and longed for them. Did anyone ever hear or read of a thing more unreasonable than for a man to expect fruit out of season. What if a yeoman of Kent should go to look for pippins in his orchard at Easter (the supposed time when Jesus sought for these figs), and, because of a disappointment, cut down all his trees? Again, whose fig-tree was it? Jesus owned nothing. Even among the relics preserved by the church of Rome there was not so much as a three-legged stool or a pair of nut-crackers that belonged to him.

*The "Freethinker," December 2, 1883.*



# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL :

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

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. F. HAMPSON.—Unfortunately we did not preserve the letter. But a letter sent c/o the Shanghai *North China Daily News*, should find the writer.

A. LANG.—We think the matter had better rest where it is, at least so far as the *Freethinker* is concerned. We try to be fair to an opponent, and are more careful in that respect than in the case of a friend. One may take liberties with friends, but not with enemies.

B. LAWSON.—Mr. Cohen is too old a debater to be dragged into all sorts of irrelevancies when discussing a set subject. Mr. Lunn's weakness is that he is quite unacquainted with the case for Free thought.

H. C. FROST.—Will appear. Crowded out of this issue.

F. ROBERTS.—The Bradlaugh notices you mention are quite well known, and were used in the Bradlaugh Centenary Volume.

W. T. RODGERS.—The Secretary of the N.S.S. will be writing you. The fresh consignment of Ingersoll will be on hand in about six or eight weeks. Well bound in cloth 7s. 6d.

D. KNIGHT.—You seem to be moving in something like a circle. Man as a part of nature must share with the whole responsibility for what happens—if responsibility is the right term to use. Man's capacity for improvement must depend upon his ability to direct natural forces, and surely the capacity for unbiassed and informed thinking is a very important factor in this work of improvement.

C. LESTER.—Mr. Cutner's remark that Christians represented Paine as dying "shrieking for whisky with one hand and cursing Jesus with the other," was an attempted humorous picture of the attitude of certain Christians to *Infidel Death-Beds*. Evidently the humour fell short of its mark.

G. T.—Sorry we made the blunder of placing Hulme in Salford instead of Manchester. But the criticism was unaffected by this geographical slip.

B. WITHINGFORD (Sheffield).—One must bear these journalists with patience. Nearly all of them write with one eye on the editor. Our policy is to allow a contributor to state his own views, so long as they are expressed with decency and represent a reasonably expressed point of view.

B. G. BAYFORD.—Shall appear soon.

*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. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.*

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

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

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

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

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

## Sugar Plums.

There was a good audience at Hull on Sunday last, to listen to Mr. Cohen, and a pleasing feature of the meeting was the number of young men and women present. Many of these were helping in the conduct of the meeting, and that was all to the good. It is hoped to start a Branch of the N.S.S. in Hull in the near future.

The N.S.S. has prepared a New Year's Card for 1934. This is a great improvement on the others issued. It is a folding card with a very beautiful and appropriate quotation, and a decorative floral design in colour by Mr. H. Cutner. These will be sent in packets of seven at one shilling each, post free. Single copies twopence each.

We have been able to arrange for a further supply of the works of Ingersoll, which we hope to have on hand in about two months. The copies have to come from India; hence the delay. But again, the supply will be limited, and we cannot say how many we shall have. But this consignment will be final, as the work cannot be reprinted at anything like the same price. It is substantially the whole of the 12-volume Dresden edition, with some additions, and covers nearly a thousand pages octavo, well printed.

The previous copies were bound in half-boards, and the binding was rather light for the size and weight of the book. We are now having the volumes bound in a strong cloth, which will make the price 7s. 6d. (postage ninepence extra), and we know that buyers will find the volume even better value than it was. Nothing like it has ever been sold at the price in the history of Free-thinking publications. And nothing like it is very likely to be published again. A complete Ingersoll, well printed and well-bound for 7s. 6d. is indeed a bargain. We advise all who wish to secure a copy to send on their orders without delay. The volumes will be dispatched so soon as they come to hand.

All who have a regard for the liberty of the subject owe their thanks to Mr. Justice Macnaghten for his peremptory refusal to permit his court to be placed in a position of subserviency to the Commissioner of Police and the Home Secretary. The main facts are these. In the course of an accident case, one of the defendants had made a statement to the police, which the Judge asked to be produced. The Attorney-General, Sir Thomas Inskip, said that the Commissioner of Police, Lord Trenchard, had said the document was a confidential one, and declined to produce it. A letter from the Home Secretary was also produced urging that it "was against the public interest to produce the letter," and Sir Thomas held that this decision was binding on the court. Luckily the Judge insisted, and also reminded all concerned that:—

The judges of these courts, ever since the Act of Settlement have been absolutely independent of the Crown. Their duty is to administer justice as between subject and subject and as between the Crown and the subject.

He further said that:—

It must not be presumed that the Crown has any right to intervene in a private suit or that the Court is in any respect the servant of the Crown.

That is quite plain and decisive. And when the document was produced the judge declared there was nothing whatever in it that could be at all considered as making disclosures injurious to the public interests.

It was one more attempt to place the public under the absolute control of mere officials, any one of whom might be removed at any time. For a Home Secretary, whose appointment might be due to party influence, or to party interests, to decide whether information concerning any man may be withheld from a Court is to impose as dangerous a form of tyranny as one can imagine. It is

quite as bad as supplying a secret document for the judge while withholding it from the defence—as happened in the Dreyfus case in France. The document in this case appears to have contained nothing that had not already appeared in the hearing, so that one is left with the conclusion that it was no more than an attempt to establish a precedent that might have decided a similar issue of greater importance. Mr. Justice Macnaghten has rendered the public a great service. What one has to do now is to watch the House of Commons to see that it makes no attempt to make legal a practice which would remove one more guarantee of a fair trial in every case. Dictatorship is bad enough, but to have the liberty of men and women placed at the mercy of a mere Commissioner of Police or a Home Secretary is infinitely worse.

The death of that fine literary essayist, Mr. Augustine Birrell, calls attention to the fact that, though brought up in strict orthodoxy, he gradually thought himself out into almost complete scepticism. His progress this way was marked by three steps which some critic wittily called, Religion, Irreligion and Birrelligion. Mr. Birrell's *Obiter Dicta* makes delightful reading—even though one may not agree with his treatment of Thomas Paine.

## Freethought & Political Science.

### I.

THE above title is somewhat of a misnomer. True, there are chairs of "political science" at some of our Universities. Yet, to judge even by utterances to hand from official exponents, its subject matter—whatever this term may be taken to include—is only in an embryonic or elementary stage. On occasion it may embrace things pertaining to "political economy" and Law. For the present purpose we will confine ourselves to and define it as the attempt to study problems of Government, the constitution of the State, the nature of Citizenship therein—to study these in a rational and scientific spirit. To do so in order to elucidate modes and institutions which consist with a Libertarian ideal of social progress and ascendant Life; in contrast to doctrines of theocratic and absolute authority from which historic views of Government descend. Or, again, to secure a valid criterion of judgment of new or bastard forms of arbitrary power and dictatorship arising on the demise of older sanctions. Obviously then this vital interest invites free and candid examination.

There can be no ground for rational consideration of Government and the State, unless the subject itself is accepted in the first place as a fruitful theme for criticism. When the pioneers in this connexion began in the seventeenth century to question the basis of Government and responsibility for the Commonwealth, they were up against sanctions and inhibitions established as from on High under absolutist canons. In support of counter institutions, or opposition to misrule and injustice, they cast about for the origin of legal sovereignty which they found in a theory or assumption of a social compact between ruler and subject. This was an agreement to surrender primal independence in order to unite with others for mutual assistance on the understanding that the ruling power should act so as to ensure this equal security. If it failed to do so, resistance or supersession was justified. So English theorists like Milton, Sidney, Locke, upheld the prerogative of Parliament in this spirit in its struggles with the Crown. They argued for Toleration as a means of arriving at religious truth as against the exclusiveness of sects and sacerdotalists; which with Locke did not extend to the "Atheist" on the ground that social

obligation can have no hold over him, for "the taking away of God dissolves all." Though the term itself indicates the existence of a bolder kind of religious heresy, under which all such thought was classed.

These attempts to formulate a principle of civil society coincide, roughly, with the emergence of the modern world, which may be said to start from the close of the seventeenth century. But the "social contract," though it served as a *point d'appui* for attacking constituted authority, was in reality an historic fiction. Whence and how then arose that authority and power? Beliefs about these things were affected, even with heretics, by prevailing notions of divine ordinance, revelation, and the history of man as set forth in Holy Scripture. Hence the obsession of High Anglican Churchmen over the divine hereditary right of kingship, passive obedience to its rule, non-resistance under every provocation, through the Stuart period; and their hostility to the Act of Settlement (1701) following the Bill of Rights of 1688 which gave to the monarchy at last a legal, Parliamentary title only; vesting in this case in the House of Hanover being Protestant. This Act closed an epoch of struggle by defining Parliamentary supremacy; and opened up the further contest which decided eventually how Parliamentary Government should function.

Modern ethnology throws another light on the origin and nature of social union, particularly in its developed theocratic guise, which has influenced the march of mankind until quite recent times. The chief factor here has been the urge of self-preservation, leading to the primitive tribe as the unit of social cohesion and safety, however first set up—either by expansion of related families, or a casual aggregate of separate units. The tribe needs some rules for its general conduct and some recognized head or chief. So follows law and authority; and this sense of tribal relationship and sympathy persists often long after a number of tribes have been merged into an enlarged community or kingdom. Then primal law is closely connected with tribal religion, prevailing beliefs about the external world, efforts to make its forces serve their needs through the ritual practices of magic, divination, spiritism, polytheism, leading to the elaborated cults of the primary civilization and settled communities—as shown in the Near East. These kingdoms, Babylonia, Assyria, are extended by military conquest to secure control over wide resources of land and supply.

The good old rule . . . the simple plan,  
That they should take who have the power,  
And they should keep who can.

Singular things co-exist with these factors of necessity, superstition, and force, working with the slow development of civilization and culture. A belief in "such divinity doth hedge a King" enough to scupper a High Church monarchist; the widespread notion, linked with magic, that the king or chief is connected with the tribal god, and is at one with the order of Nature, controlling and affecting it for common welfare. So he must exist always in full habit, and at the first sign of bodily decay must disappear for his spirit to become incarnate in a successor. "We see a series of divine kings on whose life the fertility of men, of cattle, and of vegetation, is believed to depend, and who are put to death, whether in single combat or otherwise, in order that their divine spirit may be transmitted to their successors in full vigour, uncontaminated by the weakness and decay of sickness or old age, because any such degeneration on the part of the king would in the opinion of his worshippers entail a correspond-

ing degeneration on mankind, on cattle, on the crops."\* That is divinity with a vengeance!

The germ of true political as distinct from servile or routine life appears in the Greek city-state, with its *ecclesia* or assembly of free citizens for direct participation in the conduct of its affairs; an institution which varied in its influence in different states. The dissertations of Plato and Aristotle are the first contributions to a reasoned treatment of political forms and ideas in Europe, prior to the end of Greek independence, just as they exhibit Greek limitations. The Senate of Republican Rome at the height of its power was a more important experiment in a similar *métier*; though it failed, as the Republic failed, under dangerous novel experiences and ordeals. Yet current superstition dogged its steps, and statesmen turned from grave deliberations to fool with augurs and the auspices of a successful policy.

The dissolution of the Republic under Caesarism, when Roman dominion had been extended over the Mediterranean area, has deeply affected subsequent European movement. After the Empire had collapsed, through internal and external shocks, a new power arose to usurp its authority and resume its seat in a more formidable theocratic guise. The deified Caesar is succeeded by a sanctified Pope, head of a Church endowed from God with sovereignty over all things and people. Its sacramental office ensures to sinners expiation and hope and a safe conduct to the frontiers of the Hereafter; while its inspired revelation gives to misguided men a complete cosmogony of the universe and their own existence. In this fashion the Roman Communion of the Christian Church—that religion from the East which had grown to influence coincident with Imperial decline—imposes its rule over the barbarians who over-ran the Empire. As these barbarians coalesced into the separate kingdoms from which the Europe we know descends, and came under this influence, their chiefs were consecrated in turn; divine ordination took on a further meaning.

That is the principle of medieval order, and under the system of theocratic monarchy European development has continued, down to the ferment of new ideas and confused aims that characterizes the French Revolutionary era. The exceptions are found in a few oligarchic republics, like Venice or Florence, and the peculiar case of England. Some of this innovating thought leads far. Its opponent and protagonist of philosophic conservatism, Edmund Burke, had a certain historical justification for his doctrine of "prescription" as the source of law and order; for his hostility to "natural rights"; for his feeling that to challenge revealed religion was to question the bases of society. Hence, in a speech in 1773 on behalf of Protestant dissenters, this outburst against "infidelity," which really contains a long causal prejudice.

"It is not the Dissenters whom you have to fear. . . . The infidels are outlaws of the constitution, not of this country, but of the human race. They are never, never to be supported, never to be tolerated."

Yet the forebears of these Dissenters had given Burke's High Church friends some unquiet moments! . . . But the issue here implied is to-day fairly joined. Dismissing his crude epithet, Rationalism has to meet two complementary obligations. One is to furnish a sound philosophy of Existence; the other is to establish a secure foundation for social well-being. We will next consider some aspects of the latter.

AUSTEN VERNEY.

(To be concluded.)

## The Cross of Calvary.

ONE can usually find a good deal of entertainment in the pages of the Roman Catholic journal the *Universe*. Here is none of the wavering instability, the flitting to and fro, in matters of faith and doctrine, of which we have now so many examples in Protestant sects. Here, are superstition and credulity stabilized and buttressed—turned from being things of contempt and folly into integral tenets of belief. And after all, is this not in accord with the words of Scripture accepted by Protestants themselves: that the foolishness of preaching overcomes the wisdom of the world?

The wisdom of the human sages of all time falls into insignificance before the revelation which Rome offers to mankind as its only hope of salvation. What is man? What is the son of man? It is just here that Rome and Rationalism join issue on what is the crux of the whole business of supernatural claims. The Freethinker proclaims that human progress is indicated by advancement of humane feeling. Though many Christians speak of their God as a God of Love, it is quite clear that he only adopts that attitude towards those who implicitly accept his conditions. To others he presents his other face—he has ever been a two-faced Deity—a face of virulent hate.

An increase of humane feeling is only possible through wide knowledge and deep understanding. But the acquisition of knowledge not approved by Rome is a mortal sin punishable by the dread curse of the Church here, and everlasting Hell hereafter. To keep minds in subjection, Rome resorts to symbolism. Thus we have the Real Presence, Transubstantiation, Infallibility, Oneness. And the central point from which all this symbolism radiates upon cramped and craven intelligences is the Cross of Calvary.

In the case of Roman Catholics humane feeling towards outsiders is a crime. This position with regard to heretics implies an authoritative claim on the part of Rome to use whatever form of punishment against heretics she chooses. This claim has never been departed from, and would be enforced but for the lack of power and secular restraints. At the core of it is an essence of hate which has stained with innocent and heroic blood the pages of the history of Christianity—and maintained a callousness and lack of compassion towards suffering, whose roots are in supernaturalism, and which certainly and distinctly is quite inhuman. And what of the beasts of the field? Here man has absolute dominion. The poor hunted and tortured creatures of field and wood must contribute to the amusement of murderous men. This is the sort of thing that not long ago appeared in an issue of a "Gentleman's" monthly magazine *The Scottish Field*.... A picture of two "Sportsmen" standing over a corpse of a stag with the inscription: "This stag swam across the Loch Ericht with a broken foreleg and a bullet in its stomach."

Don't let it be doubted that there are Protestants who are as virulent in their ferocious hate of heretics as any Catholic! It is only by the pressure of Free-thought and secular improvement and restraints that the wrath of God does not boil up and submerge thousands more frequently! But every now and again we have a dandy earthquake or a display by some lively volcano, or a decimating epidemic. He doeth all things well!

And we are told these are crosses human beings have to bear, and their only hope is to be found in the Cross of Calvary—on the principle it may be supposed that cure is to be found in a hair of the dog that bit you! The *Universe* is greatly exercised in getting "good Catholics" to observe all the "Stations of the

\* Dr. J. G. Frazer in *The Golden Bough*; a feature limned with his usual wealth of illustration.

Cross"—a theologically technical phrase touching what is at the very heart of Roman Catholicism. One might venture to ask a question about the dimensions of the Cross. The pictures of it that periodically appear in the *Universe* suggest that it was from 30 to 40 feet high and 12 to 15 feet broad. We are not told in "Sacred" Writ that ladders were used to carry out the Crucifixion; but they would have been necessary if the cross was as big as it is represented in the *Universe*. A Russian artist of pre-Soviet days painted a picture of the Crucifixion showing a cross about eight feet high, and the poor little, wretched, stunted, starved, figure nailed to it possessed none of the physical beauty of head, face and figure, which so many other artists have attributed to Jesus. But, of course, it is as well to represent the Cross of Calvary as having been of very considerable size—otherwise how is one to explain the enormous number of chips of it scattered about the Roman Catholic world as cherished relics? Yet it may be that the mechanics of the New Testament are as crazy as its ethics and economics! And it was something to require the pale Galilean to carry a cross of such weight as the *Universe* chooses to depict! Anyway, his modern disciples are endeavouring to make Humanity carry a big Cross of gold to its Crucifixion!

IGNOTUS.

## The Debate at Conway Hall.

THE large audience which filled Conway Hall, from ceiling to floor on November 21, proved two things—how much people love an intellectual battle, and what a big following Mr. Chapman Cohen has in the Free-thought movement. Mr. Arnold Lunn, who was his opponent for the second time, has, since the last encounter joined the Roman Catholic Church, and it seemed rather strange that more of his co-religionists than were present, did not accompany him on this occasion.

The subject for debate was "That Science discredits the idea of God," and was so worded to make Mr. Cohen the opener. Mr. Lunn wished to have the last word, his reason being that in the previous debate, making the first speech placed him at a serious disadvantage with such a formidable opponent as Mr. Cohen.

Unfortunately, the new arrangement seemed even more fatal both for Mr. Lunn and the success of the debate. After all, there are two disputants in a discussion, and it is always the privilege of the opener to put a case which his opponent must follow as far as possible. He either can analyse it step by step; whether he is successful or not in demolishing it is beside the point; he at least shows some intelligent understanding of the position. Or, he can ignore it except for some few irrelevant allusions and talk about something else; in which case the audience are able to judge of his standing in controversy.

Mr. Cohen's first speech was a model of the kind of thing which paralyzes an opponent who is not quite up to the standard required for such a discussion. It was like the first moves of the accomplished chess player who, against a novice ignorant of the power of opening moves, puts his men down at once in impregnable positions and has won the game before his bewildered opponent knows exactly what happened.

Very carefully and with the utmost clearness Mr. Cohen defined his position. He first of all pointed out that what he meant by God was the God expounded in the creeds and by the Churches, and he was not in the least concerned with an abstraction or a mathematical deity, or such a God as the residuary vacuum of Pro-

fessor Eddington, or even the conception of Sir A. Thomson, whose God seemed to be no more than a personification of human despair. He thought of God in the religious sense, a personal, intelligent God, one to whom you can talk, who arranges the world, punishes the guilty and rewards the faithful.

As for science, Mr. Cohen insisted on the difference between science as such and the *beliefs* of scientists, beliefs which owe nothing to the findings and researches of science. For this reason he begged Mr. Lunn not to stun the audience with long lists of famous scientists who believed in God or a God, he would concede him all the scientists and get on with the subject, and he proceeded to examine in detail the true basis of science and its implications. From this point Mr. Cohen showed how nowhere in research or in discovery have scientists made use of the concept of God, and how useless has been even the very idea of God.

On the positive side, Mr. Cohen started with the conceptions of primitive peoples and showed how their ignorant fears and obsessions dominated not only the whole of the New Testament, but were dominating all the Churches to this day. He insisted that the question of discussing whether a God existed or not was to-day irrelevant. We had to discuss why people believed in one. We had the same set of facts, but the interpretation now was a different one. Religion gave you a world tenanted by spirits, and it was for us to choose this world or that of science. You could not take both.

It was a magnificent chance for Mr. Lunn to exhibit his quality, but strange to say—or perhaps it was not strange—he made not the slightest attempt to make use of it. But strong as was Mr. Cohen's case, it is nearly always possible to present another aspect of the same facts. There is indeed originating from the Roman Catholic side another view of anthropology criticizing the position laid down by Mr. Cohen. With this, however, Mr. Lunn appeared entirely unacquainted. Instead, he said he knew perfectly well that scientists did not trouble to call in God in their investigations and he agreed that God was a Person. He claimed that Mr. Cohen ought to have dealt with the classic arguments for the existence of God made by Aquinas, and said that Bradlaugh years ago always appealed to scientists, and here was Mr. Cohen giving them up! Mr. Lunn even quoted the *Religious Beliefs of Scientists* by Tabrum (perhaps under the impression that Mr. Tabrum was almost the equal in authority of Aquinas), and then asked Mr. Cohen to explain the mystery of the Universe, the way in which life came into the world, Poltergeists in which he (Mr. Lunn) absolutely believed, chromosomes, how reptiles change into birds, and many other similar questions—but of attempting any answer to the finely reasoned arguments of Mr. Cohen there was not a trace.

The reply by Mr. Cohen was an attempt to get Mr. Lunn back to the main issues, but to no purpose. Mr. Lunn started off again with references to the absolute ineffectiveness of Bradlaugh, and a statement which obviously surprised most of the audience that he (Mr. Lunn) had been an Atheist at nineteen. He certainly must have completely forgotten his Atheism on the platform for—as was pointed out—he showed no familiarity with the Free-thought position. For the rest Mr. Lunn peevishly complained that arguments used by his Atheistic friends on the Continent had not been used by Mr. Cohen.

The last speech made by his opponent was again an endeavour to bring Mr. Lunn back to the question of the debate, but it seemed to make Mr. Lunn more angry than ever. He even introduced Paley's watch

argument, under the impression, no doubt, that it was something quite new to the audience, and he made many more challenges to debate other questions—such as the Resurrection and the Lourdes "miracles," and he finally insisted on the growth of the Catholic Church, and that the Heavens declare the Glory of the Lord.

The audience gave Mr. Lunn every chance—though it was difficult to suppress the tittering, and occasionally the loud laughs at some of the statements made by Mr. Lunn. But it was pathetically obvious that a first-class debate requires two debaters on the subject in question, and not one who deals with it as well as he is able, and another who talks about something quite different.

Mr. J. P. Gilmour made an admirable Chairman, and Mr. Cohen proposed and Mr. Lunn seconded a vote of thanks to him, which the audience heartily endorsed. The meeting then terminated.

H. CUTNER.

### Tone.

Much of the attractive power of religion rests on the manner of its presentation rather than on what is presented. The religious preacher interweaves a good deal of sincere human kindness with such preposterous statements as that a "God," having a man's body, rose up after being killed, floated away, bloodless and wounded, into (or beyond) the upper atmosphere, and is still in existence "sitting" on the right hand of himself. Talking asses, man-swallowing fish, and fig trees that wither at a curse are served, like sugared pills, in a coating of grief over the illness of one's mother or concern for the welfare of the baby. It is no part of Freethought propaganda to stress the many cases in which these expressions of kindly sympathy are insincere, are an affectation adopted as a matter of policy or are so shallowly grounded that the slightest breath of controversy will convert them into spite, hatred and all uncharitableness. Let us allow for the moment that such expressions as "Dearly beloved brethren," "O, soul oppressed," "A hearty welcome is extended," "The Lord bless and keep you," or "Our dear brother here departed," and all the lamentations of Christian preachers over human sorrow, suffering, affliction and disaster as well as the Christian's concern for the protection of animals are beyond question in their sincerity. Let us grant that deep and genuine feeling prompts the utterances as, in many cases, it undoubtedly does. There still remains a consideration of which the ordinary man or woman in the pew seems to be unaware. It is that a statement is true or false quite independently of its manner of expression or of the moral or intellectual quality of the person uttering it. If a fool says that twice two make four, the statement made is a true one. If a murderer asserts that sheep eat grass it is true. If a person lacking in taste and in appreciation of the delicacies of language says, "if a thing's b— well black it ain't b— well white," he states a truth, though with doubtful verbal economy. On the other hand, if an estimable person were to express in the most perfect style a conviction that twice two make five, that sheep eat coke, and that a black thing is white, the excellence of his character and his immaculate diction would hardly save his reputation as an accurate observer. That anything so obvious should need to be stated is a melancholy sign of the extent to which "theology" or next-world-ism has warped the minds of otherwise intelligent people. Many years ago I asked a Unitarian minister if he had ever been to a Freethought meeting, and what he thought of it. He said he had, but that it was in a room over a public house, there was a smell of beer, the room was not very clean and the windows were shut. So, of course, that settled it. "God" must have sent Jesus into the world because Freethinkers with limited funds were only able to rent a rather undesirable kind of room, or because, having to choose between foul air and draughts, they

chose unwisely. If Freethinkers were able to buy Westminster Abbey, Freethought would be quite logical and sound, but the conversation with the Unitarian minister was in the days when bequests to a Freethought organization were illegal.

Perhaps—who knows?—there is a time in store for the human mind, when dignity and beauty will have found their happy union with common-sense, and when the genial and sober atmosphere of the cloister, and the critical exactitude of the forum will no longer be at variance. It is very hard, however, at present to import a stately, or even a courteous tone into such questions as whether a "father" who was a "God" had a "son" who was a man and whose real father was a "Ghost," his mother being a woman. It is very difficult to controvert such utter nonsense without saying to one's opponent by implication "if you believe it, you are a fool and if you don't you are a humbug." And the particularly distressing feature of the whole business is that even while we say, or imply, this we know that in all matters outside "theology"—there is, of course, really no such science as theology—the people we address are excellent, kindly, sympathetic, just and considerate human beings.

R. S. N. STONER.

## Correspondence.

### AN APPRECIATION..

#### TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—For some fifty years I have been a reader of the *Freethinker*, not having missed one single issue. It has been one continual source of pleasure and instruction which enables one to view life in its real aspect, abolishing the fear of "hell," or hopes of the "aviary," which was instilled in our minds when young. What a lot of unnecessary trouble might be saved if parents withdrew their children from religious teaching in the elementary schools and let them choose a religion later, if they so wished. The clergy would fight this, as they always have done, for they know full well that what our leader, Charles Bradlaugh, said is quite true, viz., that the first impression on the wax is deepest.

The *Freethinker* does not depreciate with age. We look for each issue as eagerly as ever, always finding something fresh and to the point.

Since the decision to celebrate the Centenary of the late "Charles Bradlaugh's" birth, it has been a real boon to some of us older readers, who have known him and listened to his oratory. I was present when he resigned his "Presidency," at the "Hall of Science." I have not, and never shall, forget that morning. Having read the new volume of his life, one knows it must do good to our cause. If the whole work of his life could be printed what a book it would make. I am very pleased with Mr. H. Cutner's articles on our old and departed leaders. It makes one feel young again to read them. It brings back many memories of the past. Freethinkers should be very proud of their old leaders, not forgetting those who are with us now, and carrying on so ably the good fight for the emancipation of the human mind.

F. GOODWIN.

### CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM.

SIR,—In a letter published in your issue for November 26, Mr. Crawshay Frost criticizes popular Christianity. At the same time he endeavours to show that the conduct of Islam has been no better than that of his own faith. He mentions as an act of cruelty perpetrated by Moslems "the sending back to their own country of three thousand prisoners with their eyes put out by a former Sultan."

As a modest student of Islamic history, I should very much like to know when and where this took place. Is not Mr. Frost thinking of the conduct of Basil II.—the Bulgar Slayer—after the Battle of Belasita in 1014? This most Christian monarch put out the eyes of 15,000 prisoners before sending them to their homes!

ERNEST H. GRIFFIN.

## CHRISTIAN ORIGINS.

SIR,—The recent review of Mr. Whittaker's book on Christian origins by your contributor, Mr. H. Cutner, incites to a renewed interest in the subject. It is of import to have the admission of so close a student, despite the number of learned volumes that have been devoted to its elucidation. To my mind it is an issue apart from the main contention between the system of Christianity, and supernatural religion at large, and the Rationalist critique and position. The system rests on certain primary doctrines and principles. If they are shown to be incompatible or irreconcilable with advancing knowledge, experience and reason, then foundation and superstructure go by the board.

The actual origin of the system thus becomes a purely historic inquiry, however elusive. Perhaps an important clue is connected with the "Messianic idea," which seems to have been in the air during the period ascribed to the traditional founder. Christian tradition in the direct line—the only evidence we possess—is strong in the belief in such a personality as the Gospel of Jesus. The Jewish Messianic hope was a concrete egoistic faith in some high destiny for the chosen people under supernatural direction. Assuming some prophet believed himself to be the Messiah, but interpreted his mission in a more spiritual sense, and suffered in consequence, this has its parallel in other historic instances, and in other cults with related notions—as in the case of the "Bab" in modern Persia, and the proscribed doctrine of Babüism with its own martyrs. Amid the legendary and conflicting setting of the story there is, to my mind, a certain originality in utterances attributed to Jesus in this connexion to support this hypothesis.

When the Christian movement first begins to attract outside attention it is a going concern with peculiar institutions, related to *its* theory of the Messiah or Christ.

AUSTEN VERNEY.

---

**National Secular Society.**


---

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD NOVEMBER 24, 1933.

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

Also present: Messrs. Quinton, Hornibrook, Moss, Clifton, Wood, LeMaine, Easterbrook (W.J.W.). Ebury, McLaren, Sandys, Mrs. Quinton, Juur., Mrs. Grant, and the Secretary.

Minutes of the previous meeting read and accepted. The monthly Financial Statement presented. New members were admitted to Nelson, Glasgow, Liverpool, and Parent Society. Reports of lectures, general activity, and other matters were dealt with from Liverpool, Ashington, Derby, Sunderland, Glasgow, Stockport, East Lancashire Rationalist Association, and Messrs. Silvester, Brighton and Byrne. A scheme for advertising the Society on railways was outlined, approved, and ordered to be operated. The President announced that the committee appointed to examine the Principles and Objects of the N.S.S. would meet on November 30. Details concerning the Annual Dinner were discussed. It was decided to hold a Social in London early in March, if possible. A special leaflet on recent opinions of the Bible by prominent persons was agreed upon. The Secretary was instructed to send the usual Annual Conference notice to all Branch Secretaries. The meeting then closed.

The next meeting of the Executive will be held on January 12, 1934.

R. H. ROSETTI,  
General Secretary.

---

The reason for the universe is said to be a "god" whose reason for existence is the universe. This proves that the universe is the reason for its own existence!

Alfred Kirkham.

**SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.**

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

**LONDON.****OUTDOOR.**

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

**INDOOR.**

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, Hall No. 5, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham, S.W.4): 7.30, Mr. G. S. Gueroult (British Union of Fascists)—"The Policy of the British Union of Fascists."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, John A. Hobson, M.A.—"From Democracy to Dictatorship."

STUDY CIRCLE (N.S.S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, December 4, Mr. A. D. McLaren—"Obscurantism."

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Reggiori's Restaurant, 1 Euston Road, opposite King's Cross Station): 7.30, Ambrose F. Appelbe, M.A., LL.B.—"Law Reform."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Sunday, B. A. Le Maine. 3.30, Platform 1, Messrs. Collins and Bryant. Platform 2, B. A. Le Maine. 6.30, Various speakers. Wednesday, 7.30, Messrs. Collins and Le Maine.

**COUNTRY.****INDOOR.**

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Godwin Commercial Hotel, Godwin Street): 7.0, Mr. F. E. Monks (Manchester)—"The Problem of Divorce." Members bring your friends.

BIRKENHEAD BRANCH N.S.S. (Baker's Hall, 36 Cloughton Road, Birkenhead): 8.0, Monday, December 4, Mr. J. W. Porter—"The Freethinker and his Task."

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Cobden Hall, Cort Street, 7.30, Monday, December 4, Mr. Jack Clayton—"The Sexual Implications of Buchmanism."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. Jack Clayton—"The Sexual Implications of Buchmanism."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, M'Lellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Mr. Albert Sharman, M.D., Ch.B., B.Sc., M.C.O.G.—"Sex and Convention." *Freethinker* and other literature on sale at all meetings.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Professor Robert Peers, M.A. (Nottingham University)—"The Prospects of Democratic Government."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Islington, Liverpool, entrance in Christian Street): 7.0, Mr. J. V. Shortt (Hon. President, Liverpool Branch)—"The Psychological Heritage of Religion."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Clarion Cafe, Market Street): 7.30, Mr. J. Clayton (Burnley)—"The Gospel of Atheism."

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Plymouth Chambers, Hall 5, Drake Circus): 7.0, Mr. H. W. Speare—"Christianity and the Child."

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Central Hall, Chapter Row, South Shields): 7.0, Mr. Allan Flanders.

## The Revenues Of Religion

By

**ALAN HANDSACRE.**

**A RECORD OF ESTABLISHED RELIGION.  
IN ENGLAND.**

Official Facts about Church Revenues.  
History—Argument—Statistics.

Cloth 2s. 6d.  
Paper 1s. 6d.

Postage 3d.  
Postage 2d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGDON STREET, E.C.4.

## RATIONALIST EVALUATIONS AND THE TRUE DIRECTION OF CIVILIZATION

By **AUSTEN VERNEY.**

This work defines a Rationalist attitude to practical life, in terms of a cultural approach to its problems at one with light, freedom, and sure modes of material advance.

"Mr. Verney has brought a great deal of material together, and not infrequently he writes eloquently and pointedly. . . . His best chapters seem to be those which deal with the State Contra Mundum and the Economic Conundrum, and they contain much that he wrote with evident enjoyment. . . . The emphasis of the book upon 'Reason' is thoroughly healthy, and the author maintains his faith in knowledge against the Cult of Unreason in all its forms."—*The Common Room.*

Heath Cranton Ltd., 6 Fleet Lane, London, E.C.4. 7s. 6d  
net. Postage 6d.

### ABOLITION OF SLAVERY

The Truth about the Christian Churches

## Christianity, Slavery and Labour

BY

**CHAPMAN COHEN**

THIRD EDITION REVISED AND ENLARGED

Paper 1s. 6d. Postage 2d. Cloth 2s. 6d. Postage 8d.

## PAGANISM IN CHRISTIAN FESTIVALS

BY

**J. M. WHEELER.**

Clothette 1s. Postage 1½d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C.4.

**A**N M.A. gives lessons in English, Latin, French, German, Shorthand, etc. Terms moderate. Reply D2, c/o. *Freethinker*, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

## UNWANTED CHILDREN

In a Civilized Community there should be no  
UNWANTED Children.

For an Illustrated Descriptive List (68 pages) of Birth Control Requisites and Books, send a 1½d. stamp to:

**J. R. HOLMES, East Hanney, Wantage, Berks.**

ESTABLISHED NEARLY HALF A CENTURY.

## LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

Issued and Sold by

THE PIONEER PRESS (G. W. FOOTE & Co., LTD.)

61 FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C.4.

### ROBERT ARCH

SOCIETY AND SUPERSTITION. 4d., postage ½d.

### CHAPMAN COHEN

A GRAMMAR OF FREETHOUGHT. Cloth Bound, 5s., postage 3½d.

ESSAYS IN FREETHINKING. Three Complete Volumes. 7s. 6d., post free.

GOD AND EVOLUTION. 6d., postage 1d.

MATERIALISM RE-STATEd. Cloth, 2s. 6d., postage 2½d.

GOD AND THE UNIVERSE. Cloth 3s., postage 3d., Paper 2s., postage 2d.

CHRISTIANITY AND SLAVERY. Cloth 2s. 6d., postage 3d.; Paper 1s. 6d., postage 2d.

WAR, CIVILIZATION AND THE CHURCHES. Cloth 3s., Paper 2s., postage 3d. and 2d. respectively.

### Prof. J. W. DRAPER

CHRISTIANITY AND CIVILIZATION. 2d., postage ½d.

HISTORY OF THE CONFLICT BETWEEN RELIGION AND SCIENCE. 395 pages. 2s., postage 4½d.

### ARTHUR FALLOWS

REALISTIC APHORISMS AND PURPLE PATCHES, Paper Covers, 3s. 6d., postage 4½d.

### H. G. FARMER

HERESY IN ART. 2d., postage ½d.

### G. W. FOOTE

BIBLE ROMANCES. 2s. 6d., postage 3d.

THE BIBLE HANDBOOK. 2s. 6d., postage 2½d.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF SECULARISM. 2d., postage ½d.

THE JEWISH LIFE OF CHRIST. 6d., postage ½d.

SHAKESPEARE AND OTHER LITERARY ESSAYS. Cloth 3s. 6d., postage 3d.

### Col. R. G. INGERSOLL

THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH. 1d., postage ½d.

WHAT IS RELIGION? 1d., postage ½d.

WHAT IS IT WORTH?—1d., postage ½d.

### DAVID HUME

AN ESSAY ON SUICIDE. 1d., postage ½d.

### ARTHUR LYNCH

BRAIN AND MIND. 6d., postage 1d.

### W. MANN

CHRISTIANITY IN CHINA. 6d., postage 1d.

MODERN MATERIALISM. Paper 1s. 6d., postage 2d.

PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN MORALITY. 2d., postage ½d.

SCIENCE AND THE SOUL. 3d., postage 1d.

THE RELIGION OF FAMOUS MEN. 1d., postage ½d.

### GERALD MASSEY

THE HISTORICAL JESUS AND MYTHICAL CHRIST. 6d., postage 1d.

### A. MILLAR

THE ROBES OF PAN. 6d., postage 1d.

### UPASAKA

A HEATHEN'S THOUGHTS ON CHRISTIANITY. 1s., postage 1d.

### GEORGE WHITEHEAD

THE CASE AGAINST THEISM. A Reasonable View of God. Cloth Bound, 2s. 6d., postage 2½d.

THE COMING OF THE SUPERMAN. 2d., postage ½d.

RELIGION AND PSYCHO-ANALYSIS—

RELIGION AND WOMEN. 6d., postage 1d.

GOD, DEVILS AND MEN. 9d., postage 1d.

SEX AND RELIGION. 9d., postage 1d.

THE  
"Freethinker" Endowment Trust

A Great Scheme for a Great Purpose

THE *Freethinker* Endowment Trust was registered on the 25th of August, 1925, its object being to raise a sum of not less than £8,000, which, by investment, would yield sufficient to cover the estimated annual loss incurred in the maintenance of the *Freethinker*. The Trust is controlled and administered by five Trustees, of which number the Editor of the *Freethinker* is one in virtue of his office. By the terms of the Trust Deed the Trustees are prohibited from deriving anything from the Trust in the shape of profit, emoluments, or payment, and in the event of the *Freethinker* at any time, in the opinion of the Trustees, rendering the Fund unnecessary, it may be brought to an end, and the capital sum handed over to the National Secular Society.

The Trustees set themselves the task of raising a minimum sum of £8,000. This was accomplished by the end of December, 1927. At the suggestion of some of the largest subscribers, it has since been resolved to increase the Trust to a round £10,000, and there is every hope of this being done within a reasonably short time.

The Trust may be benefited by donations of cash, or shares already held, or by bequests. All contributions will be acknowledged in the columns of this journal, and may be sent to either the Editor, or to the Secretary of the Trust, Mr. H. Jessop, Hollyshaw, Whitkirk, Nr. Leeds. Any further information concerning the Trust will be supplied on application.

There is no need to say more about the *Freethinker* itself, than that its invaluable service to the Freethought Cause is recognized and acknowledged by all. It is the mouthpiece of militant Freethought in this country, and places its columns, without charge, at the service of the Movement.

The address of the *Freethinker* Endowment Trust is 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

A Devastating Document.

ROME OR REASON?

BY

ROBERT G. INGERSOLL.

*A Reply to Cardinal Manning.*

with

Introductory Preface by H. Cutner.

(Issued by the Secular Society, Ltd.)

Price 3d.

By Post 4d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C.4.

SELECTED HERESIES

An Anthology from the Writings of

Chapman Cohen

Cloth Gilt - 3s. 6d.

Postage 3d. extra.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C.4.

INFIDEL

DEATH-BEDS

By

G. W. FOOTE AND

A. D. McLAREN

This is a greatly enlarged edition of a work that has for long been out of print, but which fell like a bombshell on the Christian world on its first appearance. It has now been considerably enlarged by Mr. A. D. McLaren, who has added additional chapters on "How the Ancients Viewed Death," "The Christian View of Death," "The Freethinker's attitude to Death," and "Some Christian Death-Beds," with a number of new biographies of Freethinkers. The work is biographical and bibliographical in character and will be of service and interest to both Freethinkers and Christians. The volume is well produced and cloth bound.

Price 2/- Postage 3d. extra

(Issued by The Secular Society, Ltd.)

THE PIONEER PRESS,

61 FARRINGTON STREET,

E.C.4.

Realistic Aphorisms and  
Purple Patches

By ARTHUR FALLOWS, M.A.

320 pages.

Paper Covers 3/6.

Postage 4d.

(All Cloth copies sold).

Materialism Re-stated

By CHAPMAN COHEN.

A clear and concise statement of one of the most important issues in the history of science and philosophy.

Cloth Bound, price 2/6. Postage 2½d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C.4.