

THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED *by* CHAPMAN COHEN •
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*Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums,
Letters to the Editor, etc.*

Views and Opinions.

Must we Have a Religion?

THERE are a number of people about, who appear to believe they can convert Christians by kissing them. Prompted by the influence of Christian verbiage, and quite unmindful of the experience of the young lady who went for a ride on a tiger, they profess to act upon the principle that the quickest way to cure an alligator of his taste for nigger babies is gently to stroke his back. These people show a marked fondness for religious terms. While not Christians they cling to the Christian scale of values, and love to dilate upon the beauty of a Jesus Christ they have taken from an up-to-date volume of sermons. They do not believe in a God, but they take care to avoid telling their religious friends that the idea of a God, in even its most modern presentation, is a survival of primitive superstition. They live under the delusion that with an occasional "kind word" to Christians, and a brotherly rebuke to their fellow unbelievers—in the interests of Christians—they may repeat the miracle of the early Christian young lady who is pictorially represented as leading a ferocious lion round the arena, and induce Christians either to close their churches or turn them into temples of ethical culture. Sometimes they are not content with turning one cheek when the other is smitten; they will bend their back in order to offer a wider surface for castigation.

And the Christian, a bird not so easily caught as these amiable Freethinkers imagine, looks, marks, learns, and inwardly digests—the amiable Freethinker. The latter believes he has his hook so carefully covered that no Christian fish can refuse to take the bait. In this he is right. The Christian fish belongs to that class, so irritating to a fisherman, that sucks off the bait and leaves the hook. To those of his brother-believers who are beginning to waver in their faith he says, "Look how even the unbeliever is compelled to pay tribute to the beauties of our religion, and to confess the glorious ideal of Our Lord!

What justification have we for surrendering this glorious heritage, the value of which is admitted, even by those who formally reject it?" Of course, the answer is, None at all; and the Christian continues his church-going with many expressions of pity for the poor devils who are so near and yet so far from salvation. The young lady has returned from her ride on the tiger—as an inside passenger.

Now I happen to be obstinately convinced that you cannot win over an intellectual opponent by agreeing with him, or by falling upon his neck and calling him "brother." Shakespeare did say that a rose by any other name would smell as sweet, but he did not say that if we call an onion a rose it will smell like one. The Christian is quite in order when he uses cardinal religious terms in the sense laid down, or implied by his creed. The Freethinker is as distinctly out of order when he deliberately and gratuitously uses words heavily charged with religious significance to express ideas that are in fundamental antagonism to religion. No one can be right when he uses the language of intellectual freedom to express a creed of intolerance. Words are living things; they are at once the children of the past and the parents of the future; and the marriage of totally unsuitable, and generically different couples are fated to give birth to a very ugly progeny.

* * *

That Blessed Word!

I have been writing with my mind mainly on the use of that "Blessed Word" Religion. One man tells us that he means by religion the belief in an ideal—which may cover anything that one is aiming at, from a surfeit of whisky to an overdose of "high art." Another says it is a belief in something not ourselves that makes for righteousness. Another informs us that religion is "What a man does with his solitariness," a definition that must give a lot of satisfaction to a Salvationist, whose religious feeling finds its chief expression in a series of massed howls. So we might run through scores of definitions made, as the nigger said of his wooden God, out of the definer's own head. Not many of these people who are so anxious to find some lodgment for "Religion," pay much attention to one very simple consideration. A definition must do two things. It must include all those features which a number of objects have in common, and it must exclude everything which they do not have in common. In other words, a definition must exhibit the two qualities of inclusion and exclusion. But its principal quality is that of exclusion. It must mark out limits, and the sharper the limits the more valuable the definition.

For example; to say that an object before us is a thing is to say only that it exists. To add that it is a living thing, is more enlightening, since it separates the object from the world of non-living things. To say that it is an animal, and that it is a human being,

and that it is either a black, a brown, or a yellow human being, is to add to our information by a series of limitations. To define is to limit. To make a word mean anything is to end by making it mean nothing.

What, then, is it that religion stands for? To say that it stands for an ideal, or adherence to some ethical scheme is absurd. A belief in some ideal, good or bad, is universal, and the definition would rob religion of all significance, since it makes everybody religious, and so fails to provide the first requisite for a definition. To say that it means belief in certain rites and ceremonies, is to mistake a result for a cause. Religious beliefs issue in ceremonies, but they do not make a religion. It will not do even to say that the essence of religion is the belief in a God, because before we have got to the stage of clearly defined gods, we have the phase of human culture at which man believes he is surrounded by a mysterious power which has not yet assumed a definitely personal form. Even the phrase "supernatural" has to be used with due reservation, because the distinction between the natural and supernatural is one that arises gradually in mental evolution. But with that reservation, the definition of religion as a belief in supernatural beings is one that covers the whole field, for a belief in the supernatural is the one thing in which all religions, ancient and modern, savage and civilized, agree. Remove this element and religion no longer exists. Take away from Christianity, from Judaism, from Mohammedanism, and from all the religions of the lower civilizations, the belief in supernatural beings, and what we have left may be ethics, or sociology, but it is certainly not religion. Belief in the supernatural is the one thing that really *defines*, that is, it is the one thing that marks religion off from other things.

* * *

What is A Rational Religion?

I quite agree that anyone has a perfect right to place his own construction upon such a word as religion. So he has to define as black a colour which all other people call grey. But if words are to act as a medium of thought, and not to be used for concealing thought, or for misleading others, then it is well that when we use a word we should pay attention to what other people understand by it, and not place our own private and unrevealed construction upon the term used. Let anyone try a very simple experiment. Take the first fifty casual acquaintances—not close friends, with whom one may look for a greater degree of frankness. Ask the simple question, "Have you a religion?" Off-hand I would say that seventy-five per cent of those questioned will give some kind of an evasive answer. They may not believe in any kind of a God or in a future life, they would probably hotly repudiate a definite belief in the supernatural, but they will "hedge" the moment the question of religion is raised. The probable reply will be that they have a religion, but it is not what many people understand by the term. A further question might bring forth the reply that it is a religion of ethics, or that "My religion is"—Socialism or art, or to do good. One might as sensibly talk of having a religion of footballing, or hiking. But take the seventy-five per cent of those who answer this plain question, "Have you a Religion?" in what is anything but a plain manner, and it will be found that they have no real religion at all, but do not like to confess as much.

For example. In the statement of objects of the South Place Ethical Society I find that its principal purpose is the "cultivation of a rational religious

sentiment." What does this mean? Does it mean providing a rational basis for religious beliefs? If so, then the purpose of the Society differs in no substantial degree from that of any Church in Christendom, and there is no logical reason why thousands of parsons should not at once join the Society. For they, too, are all trying to cultivate a "rational religious sentiment." Does it mean that the Society is trying to eliminate the supernatural from religion? If it succeeds, what will there be left? Certainly what is left will not be religion. Does it mean that the purpose of the Society is to give to religion a new meaning? In that case the object is neither obvious nor avowed. And if a new meaning is given to an old word, wherein lies the value of the exchange? Are the associations of "religion" so valuable that there is urgent necessity for its preservation in name? No one outside the Churches will make a claim of that character. If we do believe that, why not say openly and plainly that our criticism is aimed at abuses and distortions and not at religion itself.

It may, of course, be said that if we retain the word we shall attract to ourselves many whom we could not attract otherwise. Probably, but we lose the support of many by not going to Church, or in not avowing a belief in a God, or in a future life. We lose support in affirming that the phenomena around are the outcome of natural forces. There is not much use in affirming anything unless we lose the support of someone. But is it a gain to any movement to attract to itself men and women who have so little appreciation of its meaning that unless it is dressed up in the old terminology they will have nothing to do with it? Are we to think so little of human relations in themselves as practically to confess that they will lose their strength and their value if they are not expressed in a religious form? Is that what is meant by "the supremacy of ethics?" On the other hand, can we afford to forget that the word "religion" is so saturated with conceptions of the supernatural, so closely associated with intolerance, with foolish beliefs and harmful practices, with opposition to reform in all ages, that it must always tend to keep these practices and these beliefs alive? Surely, if I may go back to Mr. Shaw's expression, we are here unmistakably mixing the dirty water with the clean and so robbing the clean of its virtue. When a man gives up his belief in Conservatism and becomes a Socialist he does not say that he is a rational Conservative. When a man believes in Republicanism he does not call himself a rational Monarchist; nor does one who believes in evolution describe himself as a rational special creationist. Why, if we have given up all that constitutes genuine religion, do we wish to call ourselves "rational religionists"? As I have already said, language is at best but a poor instrument for the conveyance of thought, even though it is the best we have. At its best it comes to us with a load of associations that serve as a drag upon that clarity of thought at which we all ought to aim. And there is surely no justification whatever for voluntarily increasing the power of the dead hand over the living present.

There are other aspects of the subject with which I will deal next week.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

QUID PRO QUO.

Civilization boasts of its advanced treatment of diseases; but too often conveniently forgets the discredit of producing them. It is a case of "quid pro quo," and sometimes with good interest.

The Value of Voltaire

"Voltaire was a stupendous power."—*John Morley.*

"Of all the intellectual weapons which have been wielded by man, the most terrible was the mockery of Voltaire."—*Macaulay.*

FRENCH literature has been one blaze of splendid scepticism from the days of Abelard to those of Anatole France, but no name has inspired such terror in the Orthodox as that of Voltaire. Indeed, Victor Hugo regarded Voltaire as the protagonist of Free-thought, and, in his brilliant way, said, "Voltaire smiled, Christ wept." That smile of Voltaire's cost him dear, for none has been more hated nor reviled by priests of all denominations. The reason is simple. He attacked religion, not in the dull and heavy fashion of professors writing for each other, but with wit and pleasantry which survive the winnowing of generations. He made priests appear ridiculous as well as odious, and those who felt his lash, denounced him as a literary Mephistopheles, whose writings all should avoid as they would a plague. All whose interests were bound up financially with religion stigmatized Voltaire as a shallow scoffer, railing at holy things, totally ignoring the philanthropy of the man.

In his own time this jaundiced view of Voltaire was very prevalent. Dr. Johnson, not at all a bad-hearted man, thought Voltaire deserved to be transported and forced to work in the plantations. In artistic circles one meets the same abuse. Sir Joshua Reynolds, in one of his most popular pictures, introduced Voltaire as the personification of sophistry. The clergy, of course, made him the target of innumerable insults. He was the victim of countless homilies, and served to point many morals. The priests lied to such purpose that whole generations of innocent Christians firmly believed that Voltaire was not only personally responsible for the French Revolution, but for the execution of Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette.

In England there is still great prejudice against Voltaire, which, said Buckle, only ignorance can excuse. The shouts of friends and foes still fill the troubled air, and the dust of controversy is blinding. One turns with relief from books about Voltaire by enemies and partisans alike to his own letters and books. Here one finds the man himself, no mere jester, but a sensitive nature, bent on the destruction of cruelty and intolerance, and striking hard at the superstition of which these vices are the outcome. His keen eyes saw the atrocities and absurdities bound up with the Christian Religion. He saw it was essential that the religion in which intolerance had its root should be proved detestable and ridiculous. Men, he said, will not cease to be persecutors until they have ceased to be absurd; and, more than any other man, he caused the civilized world to smile at its own absurdities.

Voltaire's motto was, "straight to the Fact." He brought, smilingly, religion to the test of truth and common-sense. Was it true or not that Omnipotence had chosen Oriental barbarians as his peculiar people? Was this Christian "god" born of a virgin? Did Christ, indeed, ascend from the earth like a balloon? To ask these searching questions, and to cross-examine priests, was to cause inextinguishable laughter. And, mind you, Voltaire was not a mere jester, but a man of serious aims. He had deep convictions, and employed his wit as a weapon. There is no case of Voltaire mocking at any men who lived good lives. He did not jibe at the English Quakers, but he was merciless when he attacked the murderous priests of France, who invoked the laws to destroy their oppo-

nents. Recall what horrors happened! A Protestant pastor, Rochette, was actually hanged for merely exercising his functions in Languedoc. The Protestant, Jean Calas, was broken on the wheel, because his son was found dead, and some busybody chose to say that the father had killed him to prevent him from turning Catholic. Neither age nor sex were easily spared. La Barre, a lad of eighteen, was condemned at Amiens, for mutilating a crucifix, to have his tongue and right hand cut off, and then be burnt alive, a sentence which was commuted to decapitation. It was Voltaire who exposed these judicial murders, and, to quote Carlyle's memorable words, "the whole man kindled into one divine blaze of righteous indignation, and resolution to bring help against the world." Voltaire's services in exposing such foul wrongs will never fade from the memory of men, for he was a knight-errant for humanity.

Voltaire was splendidly equipped for his work. A perfect master of language, he wrote with that ease with which a bird trills out his song. His versatility was marvellous. "Monsieur Multiform" was his witty name for D'Alembert, and he himself had an equal right to it. In the eighty volumes of his collected works he has proved his mastery of authorship. So strong is his appeal to literary men that Macaulay, one of the most omnivorous of readers, selected Voltaire's works for his reading on his lengthy sea-voyage to India.

Among Voltaire's works, *Candide*, is the most characteristic. It remains the wittiest book in the world. The news of the awful horrors of the dreadful earthquake at Lisbon, in which forty thousand people lost their lives, roused Voltaire like a blow in the face. Moved, as he always was, to reproduce his strongest feelings in his writings, he cast his protest against Optimism into the two different shapes of a poem and the story of *Candide*. Both amply prove that beneath the cynicism beat a heart aflame with sympathy for his fellows.

In this gay little masterpiece Voltaire brought out his batteries at once, and in that searching fire the comfortable dogmas blackened and died; and the optimists were shown as laughing-stocks. Yet Voltaire was actually sixty-four years of age when he wrote it—a time when so many men are dreaming of slippered ease. The story is, briefly, that of a young man brought up in the belief that this is the best of all possible worlds. He meets with a hundred adventures which give it the lie. Life is a doubtful bargain, but one can make the best of it. That is the moral of *Candide*. "What I know," says *Candide*, "is that we must cultivate our garden," and in the last resort, "with close-lipped Patience for our only friend." Be it noted, Voltaire's philosophy was Secularist.

Voltaire was ever an apostle of common sense. One is as much struck with the soundness of his judgment as by his felicity of expression. A book might be written of his anticipation of modern thought. In a pre-scientific age he accepted the view of man's savage origin. He derived the belief in ghosts from dreams, and discerned the magical nature of religions. He anticipated very many of the social and political problems of our time. Before Malthus, he stated the population question, and helped to clear the way for modern science. He saw through the myths of the Christian Bible a century before the clergy were forced to recognize them.

For sixty years Voltaire waged unending war against the Christian Religion, and when he died the priests refused him burial, hoping that he would be thrown into the gutter like the famous actress, Adrienne Lecourreur. But he had carved his name too deeply on his

country's roll of honour, and his remains now rest beneath the dome of the Pantheon, with its front glowing with the splendid words, "Aux grand hommes la patrie reconnaissante." Here he rests undisturbed in his magnificent tomb:—

"With the sound of those he wrought for,
And the feet of those he fought for,
Echoing round his bones for evermore."

MIMNERMUS.

Life in the Universe

IN *The Universe and Life*, by Professor H. S. Jennings (Yale University Press, \$1.50), we have another contribution to the never-ending discussion of the relations between Science and Religion, this time from America.

Professor Jennings is a distinguished and versatile Naturalist, a Professor of Zoology at John Hopkins University. He has held the position of Professor of Botany, and is not only the author of numerous scientific works dealing with the Lower Organisms, Heredity, Evolution, etc., but has undertaken much experimental and research work in the laboratory, the results of which have been published in various scientific journals.

The present work, which runs short of a hundred pages, consists of three Lectures, delivered under the "Terry Foundation," founded by the late D. H. Terry, who left a sum of money, the interest of which is devoted to lectures dealing with "Religion in the Light of Science and Philosophy," a similar fund to that which provides for our "Gifford Lectures."

As we have noticed before, educated Americans are much more open in the public expression of their heterodoxy; and their higher class magazines publish articles on religion that no editors of similar magazines in this country would entertain for a moment. In fact we are worse off to-day than we were fifty years ago, when Huxley, Clifford, John Morley, Tyndall and others, trounced the religious ideas of the day.

Most of our scientists play for safety, or at least peace, domestic and social; and are as dumb as oysters on the subject of religion. A very few declare their heterodoxy; while the believers in religion, or near religion, are loud in their professions and have their reward. Their names are broadcast and boomed, the daily press gives them leading articles, and their names reverberate from pulpit to pulpit as testimonials to the truth of Christianity; when all their testimony really amounts to is that there is a sort of a something—corresponding to nothing like the God of the Bible, or the man-like God of popular belief—controlling the universe, they know not how, or from where, the only certain fact being that the cosmos is running down to ultimate annihilation and nothingness, from which there can be no recovery.

Life, for Prof. Jennings, is not something with which matter was endowed by some Creator billions of years ago, when the crust of the earth had cooled sufficiently to tolerate it. Life is a natural production, a result of the natural forces of evolution. Thus does the irrepressible body of Materialism, over which the clergy have read so many burial services, rise again from the tomb.

Of the elementary constituents of things, the electrons, protons, neutrons and atoms, he observes:—

Among their properties is the production of sensations, emotions, thought, of all the diversified mental experiences which belong to living things, to men. When a group of the elementary particles become joined in certain ways, under certain condi-

tions, they begin to feel, to have knowledge, and to think . . . Life and sensation and thought are not things apart, properties of some extra-mundane spectator of a universe that does not include them; things to be left out of account in the picture of reality, as we sometimes find to be the practice.

On the contrary, life, with its sensations, emotions, and the rest, is a constituent feature of the universe on the same basis of reality and "naturalness" as its other features; something that reveals its nature as do its other constituents. Any discussion of the nature of the universe, any picture of its activities that leaves this out of account, is preposterously incomplete, inadequate, and misleading. The universe is a system that brings forth life, sensation, emotion, thought. This will be the keynote of our presentation. (Prof. H. S. Jennings: *The Universe and Life*. pp. 15-16.)

Prof. Jennings is a thoroughgoing determinist, declaring that, "What the up-building of science depends on is merely the principle that what happens depends on the conditions, and that when different things happen, there are different preceding conditions." With the new indeterminism Prof. Jennings will have nothing to do. He declares:—

Biological science lends no support to the doctrines of indeterminism that have become rife in certain branches of physical science. The organization of science is made possible by the prevalence of experimental determinism. . . . The farther investigation is pushed in things biological, the more complete becomes the prevalence of such determinism. The history of biological science is one of steady progress in the discovery of experimental determiners for biological happenings. It leads by induction to the conclusion that there is no bar to the extension of this kind of knowledge to any case whatever; in other words, to the conclusion that experimental determinism holds throughout all things, and that any diversity of results is preceded by a diversity of conditions. (p. 49.)

Again, if life-processes were the product of an infinite intelligence, there would be no need for experiment. We should expect it to produce nothing that was not perfect. Yet what do we find? As a biologist, Prof. Jennings declares: "To make mistakes is one of the characteristic phenomena of biology. If we personify life, we must say that it delights in experimentation; it is a pertinacious and undiscouraged experimenter. And many of the things that it tries are of the sort that Darwin called in his own work 'fool experiments' with scarcely a chance of success. It will 'try anything once.' In fact it will repeat the same unsuccessful experiment, the same tragic mistake, a hundred times." (p. 54.) Let us take insect life, for instance. Life produces types with wings that are useless for flying; types with too many legs; types with imperfect sense organs:—

types that are weak, types whose parts are uncoordinated in their action; types that carry within themselves the seeds of their own destruction. In hundreds of ways, life produces imperfect types, many that cannot continue to exist even under the best conditions; many others that, under most favourable conditions, weakly carry on for a few generations, but die under the first change of fortune. These are not matters of theory; hundreds of such imperfect and inefficient types, even in single species, have been studied in detail, described in full, their origin and fortune and fate followed with thoroughness. Indeed, when one studies minutely and in detail for generation after generation the reproduction of any organism, including in his view large numbers of individuals, nothing is more striking than the great numbers of imperfect, unadapted individuals that are produced. . . . And the imperfections, it is found, are in the essential constitution of the creatures, for in so far as they reproduce, they

bring forth anew imperfect offspring like themselves. Types that are weak, imperfect, incapable of continued life are started with the same profusion as are the efficient, adapted types; in fact, in a hundred times greater profusion. . . . The pathway of developing life is profusely marked with these imperfect starts, with the attempts of life to move in directions that lead but to conditions in which life is impossible. (pp. 55-56.)

To the question, "Has biological science discovered God?" Prof. Jennings replies, "So far as I can see, it has not." The processes of nature are not guided by an all-wise and all-powerful being: "life moves into a million blind alleys. It attempts to exist and to operate with imperfect, inadequate organs, by imperfect, inadequate means. Most of its efforts fail. The progress that it makes is through the survival of a few successful remnants out of millions of failures that perish through their imperfection and inadequacy. The progress that life does make is not toward one goal but toward thousands of diverse and incompatible goals. The progress of life in one direction destroys progress made in other directions. In a word, every indication that might be sought of a guidance of life toward a pre-existing goal is lacking." (pp. 62-63.) And as for the existence of any God at all, we are told:—

The conviction of the existence of God, in any such meaning as I have indicated, has not arisen through the study of the detailed facts of science. In part, it is a reflexion of wishes, the outgrowth of a desire for an all-wise, all-powerful protector and father. In the practice of science, the tendency to base convictions upon wishes is one of the chief errors to be avoided: it does not lead to verifiable truth; on the contrary, it leads to demonstrable errors. The reaching of conclusions through the influence of wishes is most strongly opposed to the spirit of science; and the conclusions so reached can lay no claim to support by science. (p. 63.)

As for the continuation of life after death, "biological science finds no support for such a doctrine." And "If then we are to found our outlook on the world on what we discover in the scientific study of life, we are compelled to break with the notion that personality, individual identity, continues after death." (p. 87.) And when the sharpness of disappointment has passed away, one finds the standards of living, and the distinctions of right and wrong, much the same as before. A fine and outspoken work.

W. MANN.

Sanctuary

THERE is healing in these birches,
And the raindrops on the trees,
Where the soot no longer smirches,
And my face can feel the breeze
Blowing through the pine-woods all scent-laden,
In this peaceful Aidenn.

I am sick of asphalt pavement,
I am tired of granite curb,
But the country rain's sweet lavement
My soul can not disturb;
The city's grime the rain will wash away,
And new-filled brooks be gay.

I love my fellow creatures,
And the thinkers most of all,
But I weary of the preachers,
And the politicians pall;
In the country these are few and far between,
And my soul can rest serene.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

More About The B.B.C.

THE Colonel of the Guards, the Admiral, and the parsonically-minded Engineer, who feel that they are the guardians of the intellectual interests of the British public, are not to be frightened from their course. They wished to get a working-man's view of the influence of modern industry on life. So they got a working man. But when he turned out to be a *man* instead of a mere talking rabbit, they promptly stopped his speaking. Then, with the courage of the Army and Navy, backed up by the spiritual determination of Sir John Reith, they secured a domestic servant—a woman—whom the *Herald* says is in the service of one of the officials of the B.B.C.; to deliver an address. A domestic servant, who has never been in a factory or a shop, is hardly what one has in view when one speaks of a representative of modern industrial life, but from the point of view of the quarter-deck, the parade-ground, and the pulpit, it serves.

* * *

I listened carefully to the unnamed woman, and the best comment was that given by a correspondent of the *Daily Express*, who, not wishing to wound the feelings of the speaker, just remarked, "It was the worst insult that the B.B.C. has yet offered to the British public." I could have found scores of domestic servants who would have given a more intelligent address. Anything more insufferably silly than this one it is hard to conceive. The ideas were puerile, and their expression indicated sheer ignorance. But I have my doubts about it, because the ignorance and the bad grammar were overdone. I have a suspicion that the address was written by one of the B.B.C., who made the woman speak as he imagined a servant would speak. Some of the expressions were just laughable in their allusive quality.

* * *

I hope that no one will think that I am rash in questioning the honour and the honesty of the B.B.C. If they do, let them consider the following. In its desire to see that the people of the country were *properly* informed, the Manchester station got into touch with the unemployed marchers, and asked a Mr. Staunton to give an address. Mr. Staunton wrote his speech, which gave an account of the march of the unemployed, and what the unemployed thought about it. The B.B.C. told him it considered the speech unsuitable. It said things that the Admiral, the Colonel, and the parsonic Engineer, would not think of permitting on the quarter-deck on the parade-ground, or in the pulpit. So a speech was written for him, which it was suggested Mr. Staunton should give as his own, and be paid for it. Mr. Staunton said, ignoring the guineas, that he would not speak at all, and he informed the *Daily Herald* that it was "purely a schoolboy account of the march." That sets all doubt at rest. We know the B.B.C. doctors any speech that is not written by one who doctors it for himself. Now we know that it is not above writing a speech itself, and foisting it on the public as having been written by someone else. I feel pretty confident that we now understand the speech of the domestic servant who took the place of Mr. Ferrie.

* * *

Now it is quite certain that, unless we have an explicit assurance to the contrary, everyone who speaks before the microphone is suspect of being a party to a deliberate fraud on the public. Every speaker who has enough self-respect, or who will not be a party to deceiving the public, should decline altogether to submit a manuscript to the B.B.C. for revision. We shall then be able to divide the B.B.C. speakers into

two classes—men and women, and rabbits. In the case of only rabbits being permitted to speak—as is more or less the case at present—the absence of men and women of distinction will be so conspicuous that this will act as a check on the dope-giving activities of the B.B.C. Better no public opinion at all than a doped one. And a publicist's duty to the public should rank before the attraction of guineas or the fame gained through the microphone.

* * *

So that there may be no mistake as to the way in which the B.B.C. works, I give the following example of what Mr. Staunton wished to say and what the B.B.C. asked him to say. It is taken from the *Daily Herald*.

Mr. Staunton :—

I am an unemployed man with a wife and family, with two years' experience of unemployment and a victim of the means test. I and 300 others who marched with me from Lancashire were not prepared to continue under these terrible conditions, and realized that the Hunger March was an opportunity not only to protest, but also to rally the mass support of unemployed workers to take common action to end these conditions.

And here is what the B.B.C. wished to substitute :—

I am an unemployed man with a wife and family, and have been out of a job for two years. I have just come back from London and the Hunger March.

Let anyone contrast the two, and they will realize the better what is done with manuscripts that come before the B.B.C. Note the way in which "two years experience of unemployment" is altered to "out of a job for two years." "Unemployment" would sound too educated. But the impudent dishonesty of writing out an address, and then asking the speaker to palm it off on the public as his own is staggering. The "working woman" was probably more complaisant. If the British public submit tamely to this kind of thing democracy is digging its own grave. And the men who submit to it are lacking a fitting sense of duty to themselves and to the people as a whole.

* * *

My last word, at present, is to ask everyone to bear in mind the fact that the public soon forgets unless a thing is kept constantly in front of it. *Freethinker* readers, as I said last week, were mainly responsible for working the feeling against the B.B.C. into its present strength. I beg them to be as active in bringing the pressure of public opinion against the speakers. A knowledge that the general listener is likely to regard them as so many paid mouthpieces of the Colonel, the Admiral, and the parsonic Engineer, may do something to induce them to make the same stand that has been made by two working men.

C.C.

A Different Garden!

A battle-field's a screaming, twisted mess!
 Foul trench—
 Hell gas—
 Blood stench—
 Man's slaughter-house for men.
 And yet the fools—smug fools—spout pious cant!
 What! God?
 When Nature turns and tears its own entrails?
 If this of him is sign—
 "God" should not blaspheme any world of mine!

NORMAN JACKSON.

Acid Drops.

The *Manchester Guardian* prints a long and detailed account of a meeting in Berlin of the newly-formed "German People's Church." The religious tenets that call this movement into being are that God is a German and Hitler his Blue-eyed Boy. The meeting exuded religion from every pore. Of tolerance there was no sign; of meanness, malice and hatred there was a super-abundance. Yells for the internment of the leaders of other religious bodies punctuated the speeches and shouts of "kick out the Jews," and in fact for the kicking out of all foreigners and those Germans who were not enthusiastically pro-Hitler, rang through the meeting. This peculiar blend of piety and nationalism is one of the most dangerous on earth. Out of these ingredients it may be possible, with a little luck, to form a religion as vile as some of these that have gone before.

"God does nothing," said Thomas Carlyle. This seems substantially correct, but every now and again Omnipotence seems to weary of his masterly inactivity, and then some stupendous manifestation occurs. These manifestations, naturally enough, are always admirable in conception, triumphant in execution, useful in import and unmistakable in significance. Alba has been the favoured town for the latest Divine Deed. God has caused blood to trickle from the figure of Christ on a small crucifix in the Hospice of St. Clare in that city. This blood has been submitted to the Turin University, who certify it to be *real blood*. This verdict has been hailed with delight by the Diocesan Ecclesiastical Tribunal, and, according to the *Daily Telegraph*, has "given rise to an extraordinary state of religious frenzy." A procession is to be arranged in which the Crucifix will be carried round the town. And so, as always, the Mountain when in travail is delivered of a mouse.

"God's ways are not our ways," and therefore we simply accept, if we cannot understand, the time-honoured predilection of His Magnificence for Bleeding Crucifixes. The spectacle of beggars on horseback and princes afoot moves him to action not at all. And his disregard for the temples made with hands erected to his honour and glory is indeed impressive. The Church of St. Nicaise, in Rouen, a thirteenth century gem of architecture, just destroyed by fire, is the latest example of this to hand.

The disgraceful scenes at Lord Beaverbrook's meeting on the eve of the County Council polling deserve the severest censure. Several incidents point to deliberate preparation to prevent the speakers being heard, and this is inexcusable. Fascists, Communists, Conservatives and every other type of propagandist must be at liberty to call a meeting which nobody should attend who is incapable of sufficient self-control to allow a speaker to state his views. There are worse evils than bad Governments. The fanatical intolerance of a mob is one of them. Intolerance is intimately related to religion: it is the enemy of liberty everywhere.

Scepticism, secularism and indifferentism are, we are told, slowly but surely invading our schools, as far as religion is concerned. Mr. Athelstan Riley, one of the most devout of Anglo-Catholics, is quite heartbroken about it. He found out, years ago, that "generally speaking, the women's colleges were satisfactory, but the attachment to the Church of the students in the men's colleges was very doubtful." Hence, "the unhappy child may, and indeed, generally does, pass through the hands of varying degrees and kinds of faith and scepticism." We are delighted to hear it, and coming from such a distinguished member of the faith, it must be true—except, of course, the bit about the "unhappy child." The solution is quite simple and Mr. Athelstan Riley knows it as well as we do. Secular education should be the rule in all State-supported schools and the various denominations should pay for religious teaching

out of their own pockets in their own private schools if they want it, or in their own homes. But State-aided schools should be rigorously secular. No other solution is worth discussing.

Dr. Temple, who recently commenced a series of Gifford lectures, is trying to fathom "the nature of the Eternal." We have no doubt they were scholarly and full of words, but we venture the opinion that at the close nobody knew any more of the alleged "nature," than at the commencement of the lectures. But we could have prophesized that the only "nature" allowed the "Eternal" by Dr. Temple would be the "Christian" one—whatever that is; for, of course, it would be very unlikely that his interpretation would be admitted by Roman Catholics, for example. It is quite true, as Dr. Temple claimed, "if the theistic position be accepted, it is apparent that the divine will is the source of the world order," but he might have added, it is also the source of the world "disorder." In fact, once you accept Theism and its implications, then "nothing is impossible with God." The great difficulty is to accept Theism, and the modern arguments, like the older ones, are mere words. Some may be better than others, but that is all. Faith is the best proof of God.

Old age can be very unreasonable. New pavilions have been erected in Bradford Moor Park, and a party of one hundred and seventy veterans feel that they would be equally useful if opened on Sundays as well as weekdays. They formed two deputations to wait upon the Corporation Parks' Committee, and urged this upon them, but without avail. The objections to such revolutionary nonsense are obvious. All over Bradford are God's Pavilions with programmes varied enough to suit all tastes. Those who like the drab interior with stiff benches can have them, but there are also the ornate columns and the stained-glass window for those who need these accessories. They can have sermons lisped, minced or bellowed by latitudinarians, platitudinarians or attitudinarians. They can have Pleasant Christianity, heart-to-heart talks, muscular Christianity, Christianity up-to-date or Christianity as delivered to the saints. They can have sideshows conducted by elegantly attired jumping jacks, curates, mild or wild, Hot Gospellers or Faith-Healing fanatics. They are given something to please the eye and the ear, and the Roman and Anglo-Catholic see to it that even the nose is not forgotten. And yet these old people prefer to meet in the Moor Park, smoke a pipe and exchange droll stories of their infancy. There is nothing left for Bradford Corporation to do but "compel them to come in."

The Rev. Finis Dake of the Christian Assembly Church in Zion, Illinois, has got into the news. He and his congregation have read aloud the Bible with its 773,746 words in 69 hours, 17 minutes. He has issued a challenge to back his fastest readers against a team chosen from anywhere. We hope his challenge meets with many acceptances. The complete withdrawal from everyday life of the Rev. Mr. Dake, and all like him, even if only for periods of three days is an unmixed blessing.

Brotherly love manifests itself in the Christian Church to-day as yesterday. A Protestant Association at Kidlington, near Oxford, has sent a petition to the Bishop of Oxford asking him to admonish the vicar, the Rev. I. Lloyd-Jones, and call upon him to cease performing a ceremony "akin to the Roman Catholic Mass." The Vicar, who was interviewed after the meeting, said, "It is quite clear the man I ejected from my Church on Sunday is a paid agitator of this Society. I regard these people as vermin." The words of the sweet little hymn come back to us:—

Like a mighty army
Moves the Church of God

We are not divided,
All one body we,
One in hope and doctrine
One in Charity.

What is it, someone enquires, that draws people together? Well, it is safe to say that it isn't the Christian religion, despite its claim to be based on "brotherhood" and "love." For there is nothing quite so effective as that religion for antagonizing the members of the human race against one another. Nor need such an outcome occasion surprise. For it is only natural that those who imagine themselves to be in possession of divine revelation and inspired truth should regard all who dare to differ from them as enemies of true religion and God. Of course, the Great Exemplar gave them a good lead in that direction.

The *English Churchman* preparing its readers for a penitential Good Friday, quotes a large number of divines, from Calvin down to Canon Hoare, proving beyond doubt all question that Christians are committed to the ghastly doctrine of man being under a curse, which Jehovah intended to exact by the fiendish punishment of eternal hell-fire for us all. It was Bishop Jeune (the late Bishop of Peterboro') who expressed his absolute belief "that Christ bore the penalty of our guilt: that as Man's substitute He had to endure retributive sufferings." It seems incredible that the *English Churchman* has any other object in publishing all these diabolical doctrines except to repudiate them. Quite the contrary. The *English Churchman* is correct in saying that these ornaments and authorities of "theological truth" prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that Christianity stands or falls by this Atonement theory and all that it involves.

A reader of a Nonconformist journal thinks that many laymen are discontented because the churches do not allow them sufficient opportunity to take offices in the churches. He points out that in these days when there are so many outlets for one's services and financial support, the aggrieved members are likely to divert their interest and financial support to public service outside the churches. Well, so much the better for public service. One of the evils of the Christian Church is that it diverts social instincts and energies into wrong channels, and largely useless channels. Many of those who have drifted away from the churches are beginning to realize that, after taking up with some work which is really socially useful.

A letter in the *Methodist Recorder* from the Rev. C. Phillips Cape:—

Why does Bishop Heber's famous missionary hymn appear in a mutilated condition in our new Hymn Book? The second verse has been excised. Why? Some may say that its sentiment is too old-fashioned. That cannot be the reason, for in hymn 655 we may sing about the "carbuncles" we hope to see in heaven; and in hymn 646 we ask the Lord to rescue us "from fires undying." Did the Committee object to calling non-Christians "heathen"? Not at all, for in several other hymns they are so called. In hymn 889 we call them the "lesser breeds without the law." Were the words "only man is vile" counted objectionable? Heber did not write "man is only vile." If man is not "vile," why must he be born again? Jesus tells us what vile things issue from man's heart, and Jesus was the great champion of human personality. However, if other folk are not "vile" in several hymns I may apply that epithet to myself; and I can hardly object if others agree. . . .

From this one gathers that, despite the impact of "progressive revelation" and "modernism," Methodist religious sentiments and ideas—as expressed in its hymns—are still very vile. And there can be no doubt that their influence is just as poisonous in modern society.

In almost every published description of a religious sect, there will nearly always be discovered the inevitable "Freethinker," or "Agnostic," who eventually accepts Christ Jesus for some particularly silly reason. Mr. Ian Coster, writing about the Salvation Army, discovered "an officer, old in its service," who told him a "simple tale." Both his parents were "Agnostics," and "Bradlaugh was my hero." One day he saw Bradlaugh and was "disappointed." Then he saw William

Booth, and "stood rooted." This made him pray at once to God, and after talking with a friend, he suddenly had a vision of Christ "pitying me," and so he joined up at once and rose to "high rank" in the Salvation Army. We do not doubt for a moment that this touching story was told to Mr. Coster, and was believed without question. But surely he is not so naive as to imagine that the average intelligent person, who has read the same kind of thing a thousand times in tracts, can be influenced by bilge of this sort?

For the rest, we are glad to see that Mr. Coster tells us a little more of the Salvation Army's theology and a little less of its "wonderful" social work. "Man was born to sin and he goes on sinning; Christ died on the Cross to save him from eternal damnation—the first reward of sinning; repentance is the first condition of salvation; the sinner must make full confession of all sins to God; death ends the opportunity for Salvation; the believers enter the place prepared for them; hell will be a place of torment; Satan is a raging lion, a fallen angel, who was responsible for the fall of Adam and Eve; the Devil is a real enemy; the Salvationist's Kingdom is not of this world." Beautiful! This is the real thing, no mealy-mouthings of Modernism. We commend this "simple" creed to Bishop Barnes, Mr. Belloc and the Pope, and would dearly like to see what they make of it.

In a book entitled *The Social Implications of the Oxford Movement*, its author, Mr. W. G. Peck, has a chapter entitled, "The Material Collapse of Secularism." Here is an extract:—

Upon its own chosen field of material success secularism has suffered a defeat which threatens to involve mankind in disaster. Cynicism, flippancy and gloom have supplanted the confidence of the generations which assured themselves of unflinching progress. A chill despair settles upon thinkers who are unsupported by faith. The world now knows that catastrophe is by no means excluded from the possibilities of the future.

Dear, dear, one would never have thought—especially from the vapourings of its utter futility by Christians—that Secularism could have done all that. Mr. Peck, however, seems thoroughly frightened, but we can assure him that the bogey is entirely of his own making. And we can assure him further, that the only Secularism we know anything about is concerned with making this world worth living in, and neither his own bogies nor anybody else's will have the slightest effect in preventing us from working to that end.

Those believing Christians of a child-like faith and simple creed pretend to be horrified that Bishop Müller, in becoming the Nazi Pope, still subscribes to the name Christian. The astute Bishop insists that Christianity did not derive from Judaism, and that only National Socialists should preach from Nazi pulpits. But why shouldn't the Bishop add yet another to the large number of Christian sects? They all believe that they, and they only, have the truth, and to an outsider, they all seem to be in the same boat. Of course, Catholics, Anglo and Roman, and Presbyterians, and Methodists, and Greek Orthodox, and Christian Scientists, don't like it, but when they can settle among themselves what really is true Christianity, they will be in a better position to protest to Bishop Müller. But they can't deny that in one thing at least he and his Nazi followers are consistent, and that is Jew-baiting. The Bishop has had excellent examples in past Christian history, and in following that, he proves to be an excellent Christian.

Archdeacon Rawlinson, in a reply to the Bishop of Bristol's Diocesan Conference address has discovered that "the standard of education in the community generally is rising while that of the clergy may be falling, and nothing could be more perilous." We heartily agree. A rising intelligence in the community would make mincemeat of Christian arguments put forward by intellectually inferior clergy, and no more perilous situa-

tion for Christianity could be devised. The only solution we can see is to insist that it is Faith and Faith alone that counts. Intelligence should be hooted out of court. As a pious writer in a leading Anglo-Catholic journal puts it, the only thing which will save the clergy is to be "well-versed in the doctrine of Redemption through the Incarnate Son of the Father." This ought to make an intellectual layman look perfectly silly.

Mr. Beverley Nichols, whose campaign against war caused so much controversy recently, has discovered a new argument against Atheism. He has been boosting up the "simple life" in the country, and no doubt he is quite right in calling attention to the delights of the country-side, and the joys of gardening, away from the bustle and noise and grime of an industrial town. Unfortunately, like so many of our "bright young people," he is not content with leaving it at that. "A garden," he solemnly assures us, "does make you believe in God. That is a bald, blank statement, but it happens to be true. . . . I have yet to hear of an Atheist who was a good gardener." We have yet to learn why a man who is a rotten gardener need be an Atheist, and why a man who is a good gardener must be a Christian. What in the world has gardening *per se* got to do with the philosophy of Atheism anyway? But in any case there must be millions of good gardeners who are not believers, and one of the greatest was Luther Burbank. It is obvious that Mr. Nichols has not heard of *him*. Young as he is, he still has a lot to learn.

The nuns of Tyburn Convent have just opened a Novena for the complete Conversion of England, and among the thanksgivings were the hosannas raised at the acquisition of 28 converts last year. The Rev. J. P. Arendzen was the preacher, and he insisted on the "absolute necessity of Faith as the foundation of all religion." We have said the same thing over and over again in these columns, but somehow we never get the thanks due to us for thus championing Faith. The Rev. Father also said, "God does not ask that we should be learned in difficult and abstruse sciences . . . all such knowledge sinks into insignificance before the simple faith of the little Catholic child, kneeling by his mother. . . ." We seem to have heard all this before, but its sublime pathos, no doubt, will make the believing nuns still more believing. However, we hope they will manage to rope in another twenty odd converts into the fold. England really must be converted!

On the question of "finding God," the Rev. Will Horner says, "Can I find God? No. But God is seeking me. And, to put it colloquially, yet reverently, I have the power to dodge him. But when I freely and gladly dedicate to him my soul, my life, my all, then he has found me." To put it colloquially, yet reverently, one might say that, judging by the specimens who believe God has "found" them, he must be very hard up for something to find and something to do, in order to make everlasting life less boring. Let us be thankful that all of us "have the power to dodge him."

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THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL :

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

Telephone No. : CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

E. CHINNERY.—We were never so absurd as to say that there was no obstacle in the way of free speech in private or business life, or in public life. What we obviously meant was, that there was no legal obstacle to attacking every institution in the country. That is a mere statement of fact. You appear to think that it is a good thing to "crush" religion by force directly or indirectly applied. We do not. We demand the same freedom for religious people that we claim for ourselves, merely asking opportunity to kill it by reasonable methods. Either consciously or unconsciously you are confusing a state of things where individual and organized bigotry prevents freedom of speech, and a condition of affairs where the law prohibits freedom of criticism and attack. Your conception of what constitutes Freethought differs very considerably from ours.

H. R. STRINGER.—Thanks for copies of letters. We hope that you and others will continue the agitation. We notice that a number of papers have written on the same lines as our recent criticisms.

S. R. READY AND J. T. BRIGHTON.—Pleased to have your appreciation of the articles on Reasoning, but we see very little chance of running them through without interruption. Some day we may enlarge them and republish in permanent form. But we have precious little time to spare at the moment.

D. STIRLING.—Obliged. Shall appear as soon as possible.

J. CLOSE.—Your criticism of the Bible has evidently stirred up a hornet's nest. But you are well able to take care of yourself.

S. MORGAN.—Phallic-worship offers a very suggestive field for exploration, but do not make it a key to unlock the whole truth about religious origins.

E. STAFFORD AND W. KENT.—Received too late for this issue. Will appear in our next.

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."

Sugar Plums.

To-day (March 25), Mr. Cohen delivers his last lecture of this season in the Picture House, Market Street, Manchester. His subject will be, "Is Christianity Played Out?" and it is to be hoped that Freethinkers will induce as many of their Christian friends to attend as possible. Admission will be free, but there are a limited number of reserved seats at 1s. each.

The Pioneer Press has secured a very limited number of copies of Dr. George A. Dorsey's last and greatest work on *Civilization*, published only a couple of years ago. Dr. Dorsey is the author of the well-known work, *Why We Behave like Human Beings*, and all his books are written on uncompromising Freethought lines. He writes too with a raciness and a directness that is to be both envied and commended. *Civilization* runs to nearly a thousand large pages, well printed and strongly bound. It is a scholarly survey of the whole history of civilization, from the earliest times onward. The work was published at 15s. net, and is now being offered at 7s. 6d., postage 9d. We strongly advise those who want a good book on the subject, which this work treats, to send for a copy at once.

Our suspicion that the B.B.C. broadcast of a "working-woman" was prepared by the B.B.C. itself is shared by the *New Statesman*. It says :—

This very tame working-woman said exactly what the *petite bourgeoisie* would like all the working classes to say—the moral being that they are all much better off than they used to be, that working women are not lazy, and that even the female lower orders like to look nice. Broadcasting House is more and more giving the impression that its talks, its musical programmes and its entertainments must be confined strictly to what will give pleasure in the most conservative suburbs of London.

In other words, we said quite plainly, the B.B.C. was working off a deliberate fraud on the public, and not, we suspect, for the first time. But it is intolerable that a narrow-minded bigot of the type of Sir John Reith, with no intellectual qualifications whatever for the job of educating the British public should be where he is. The situation, in view of recent developments, is rapidly assuming the figure of a public scandal.

The meeting held in the House of Commons on March 19, was, as one might have expected, where the B.B.C. is concerned, more or less a "fake." It was a private meeting convened by some Conservative members, and Mr. Holford Knight, M.P., who has been agitating for a special committee to consider the question of the B.B.C., was refused admission. Sir John Reith, says the papers, explained that he could not please everyone, whereas the really immediate issues are the species of censorship instituted by him, the rewriting of lectures, and then foisting them on the public as the speaker's own, and the Prussianism instituted by the parsonic Engineer, the Admiral, and the Colonel. The first issue was never dealt with, and in answer to the second, Sir John produced a testimonial signed by the staff, that no such Prussianism existed. Meanwhile, there are the public statements made by inmates of the B.B.C., and the fact of many having left because of what the "staff" says does not exist. Probably the staff knows that to say that Prussianism does exist means the sack. *We cannot trust anything that the B.B.C. says.* That is the important thing to bear in mind.

Freethinker readers have had so much to do with working up this agitation to the point it has now reached that we again impress upon them the need for keeping it up. But we suggest to them that they should take every opportunity of bringing pressure to bear upon the broadcasters. If these men, and women, realize that the general public are coming to regard them as so many tame and paid agents of the B.B.C., and that it is impossible, so long as present conditions remain, to regard them as expressing their own opinions, they may be stirred to decline to speak in circumstances that are degrading to any man of self-respect. This will not prevent the B.B.C. finding speakers who will dance to whatever tune is called, but it will definitely mark those who do so. The situation where a retired admiral, and colonel, and a religious bigot are put in charge of an organization of the character of the B.B.C. is one that is fraught with the greatest danger to democracy. The ordinary press is likely to drop the agitation soon, unless it finds there is a public that will not have it dropped.

Lord Snell has received many congratulatory notices in the press on his election to the Chairmanship of the L.C.C., but some of the writers appear curiously misinformed about his earlier history. Professor Laski, for instance, wrote a well-deserved tribute in the *Daily Herald*, in the course of which he said that Harry Snell "came under the influence of Bradlaugh and became through that Secularist Radicalism the ardent Socialist he has always remained." This is very curious reading, and can only be explained by Professor Laski's non-acquaintance with the history of Freethought in this country. For many years Lord Snell was a very busy lecturer on the platforms of the National Secular Society, and ardent in his anti-religious campaign. Lord Snell has never concealed his connexion with that Society, and he has never, so far as we know, disavowed his opinions, or altered them.

Secretaries of N.S.S. Branches are reminded that motions for the Agenda of the Annual Conference must reach headquarters not later than April 7. That date also applies to motions from private members. The form concerning delegates to represent Branches at the Conference should be completed and sent in to the General Secretary as soon as convenient; there is no need to wait until the last day for despatch. May we urge immediate attention to this.

We are asked to announce that on Tuesday next (March 27) Mr. George Bedborough will speak in the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, at 7.0, on "Rationalism; Whither." If Mr. Bedborough means by "Rationalism," what other people call Freethought, Secularism, or Atheism, the subject should be interesting, as should also the discussion.

The South London Branch N.S.S. will hold its final indoor meeting of the season to-day (Sunday) and local saints are asked to be present, and so help to make a successful finish. Details will be found in the Lecture Notices column.

We see that Mr. Charles Smith, the President of the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism, has been debating with Mrs. Aimee Macpherson in several parts of the United States. Except so far as a number of Christians may hear things they would not otherwise hear, Mrs. Macpherson, who belongs to the more ignorant type of evangelist, is really not worth bothering with. The Lord's followers are very peculiar folk, and so far as discussions are concerned may roughly be grouped into two classes—the more intelligent who know that they have no debating case, and therefore avoid discussion, and the very much less intelligent whom an intellectual appeal never touches. But very large audiences have gathered to listen to Mr. Smith and Mrs. Macpherson, and some will certainly have had their eyes opened.

Mr. Smith was also announced to lecture at Vancouver, but the Canadian authorities refused him admission. Mr. Smith announces his intention of taking his case into Court, and we wish him every success. If we believed in inspiration we should be inclined to say that the Lord is behind this, for he must know how very badly his disciples fare when they meet or listen to Freethought speakers.

The Story of the Seasons

WHEN we are very, very young it seems a long stretch of time from dark and dismal midwinter to the sunlit season of spring. But, as we advance in age, the years appear to dwindle. Christmas is no sooner past than Easter—the vernal equinox—approaches. Whitsun rapidly succeeds and Midsummer Day is quickly past and gone. The month of June departs, and when we travel through July the days shorten until, at the autumnal equinox in late September light and darkness equally divide once more the twenty-four hours of the day.

Savage man was early impressed by the varying aspects of the moon, and later, the stately procession of the seasons compelled him to recognize the changes of the agricultural year. The most ancient race, however, that has left any record of a detailed acquaintance of seasonal variations are the gifted husbandmen who tended the soil of old-time Egypt. To them it was known that, after a given lapse of time, an identical flowering and fruiting appeared in the vegetable domain, and that the highest point attained by the sun in his annual pilgrimage varied periodically, in such a manner that the same seasons and the same stages of plant development coincided

with specific altitudes of the sovereign sun. Thus evolved the idea of the year which progressively unfolds the entirety of these periodic and parallel phenomena.

At so distant a date as 3,000 B.C., the Egyptians had measured the year's length at 365¼ days. This far-reaching achievement resulted from their realization that the rising of the River Nile regularly recurred at a given period of the year. Indeed, from the dawn-time of their civilization they had observed that the annual overflowing in the Nile valley occurred at the period when the most resplendent star in the African sky, Sirius, or as they named it, Sothis, arose in the firmament at sunrise.

The civil year which was employed for social and business purposes comprised 365 days, but for agricultural undertakings the Egyptians utilized a year of 365¼ days. This last they defined as the interval that elapses between two consecutive heliacal risings of the Dog Star Sirius, at the latitude of Memphis. Now, when the extra quarter days of each succeeding year are added annually for 1,460 years, the quarter days attain a total of 365 days. It therefore follows that with the completion of 1,460 years of precisely 365 days each, the heliacal rising of Sirius must occur at the same date.

The Chaldeans, and at a later time the Greeks, adopted the Egyptian agricultural year of 365¼ days. The Romans long failed to profit by this important discovery, and their calendar remained chaotic and incoherent until the mighty Julius reformed the calendar through the introduction into the Roman State of the Egyptian reckoning. And in order to allow for the extra quarter-day in each year, Julius Cæsar determined that every series of three years of 365 days each must be succeeded by one year—leap-year—of 366 days.

More accurate inquiry, however, discloses the truth that the tropical or agricultural year is not exactly equal to 365 days and six hours. As a matter of fact, it is really less than that by about eleven and a quarter minutes. Thus, the Julian Calendar would be belated by one day in every recurring 128 years when compared with the time determined by the sun. So to remedy this discrepancy, Pope Gregory XIII., in the sixteenth century, introduced the rectification which distinguishes our present calendar. As there were too many leap years in the Julian Calendar, three of them were to be deleted, and it was decided that the centenary years, the first two figures of which were not divisible by four would not be counted as leap years. This was the case in 1700, 1800 and 1900, but the year 2,000, which will be divisible by four, thus becomes a leap year. As Charles Nordmann remarks, in his *Tyranny of Time*: "The Gregorian calendar is so successful that there will be no difference amounting to a day between the astronomical and civil years for 3,000 years."

As the time-reformer happened to be a Pope, Protestant communities were very uncertain as to the soundness of the Gregorian Calendar. It has been sarcastically said that "they preferred to disagree with the sun rather than obey the Pontifex whom Luther, with some exaggeration, described as the Antichrist." Some backward communities have persistently adhered to the unreformed system until quite recently, while others still retain the older scheme. With these last their time reckoning remains thirteen days in the rear, of more progressive States.

Throughout the world the year is usually, although occasionally the month is, regarded as the measure of time. In the Moslem and Jewish schemes the month preponderates. This discordance is traceable to the circumstance that in the near East the seasons vary but slightly, while the cloudless nights and

nomadic character of the natives make the waxing and waning of the moon more markedly apparent. The Moslem Calendar ignores the seasons, and the year is made up of twelve months composed of 29 or 30 days, while the annual period varies from 354 to 355 days.

Consequently the beginning of the Islamic year is about ten days behind, and its New Year's Day passes through all our seasons.

The Jews, however, correct this error by a method of leaping, which brings their year more or less into harmony with ours. A year consisting of thirteen months is from time to time intercalated among the periods of their normal twelve lunar months.

The Julian and Gregorian Calendars differ only in the circumstance that in the former the three leap years are not deleted every four centuries. The Julian Calendar is now observed in extremely orthodox circles only, where the Greek Church still holds sway. Where this belated system still survives, it makes the year too long. The difference now amounts to thirteen days with the anomaly that the New Year's Day of the strictly orthodox and unprogressive corresponds to the 14th of January in lands where the Gregorian system is employed.

It is gratifying to discover that both the great Asiatic races of China and Japan have now adopted the Gregorian Calendar for all public purposes. In 1915, Bulgaria also introduced this system of chronology, thus bringing that country into accordance with Britain, France, Italy and Germany, and, of course, the United States of America. States that have recently adopted the Gregorian chronology include a progressive and enlightened Turkey, as well as Greece and Roumania. Moreover, the obstinate antagonism of the super-orthodox Greek Church in Russia to the reformed calendar has been overcome by the reigning Government of that State. This is certainly unmistakable testimony of an advance towards civilization in that erstwhile priest-ridden land.

Yet, while the Gregorian Calendar has proved so successful it is not strictly accurate, and several schemes have been propounded to overcome its slight imperfections. M. Armelin, a French *savant* has recently suggested that the year be arranged in four equal quarters of ninety-one days each, these quarters to be made up of two months of thirty days, and one of thirty-one days. This totals 364 days, and to these, we gather, "either one or two supplementary days are added, accordingly as the year is an ordinary year or a leap year. These supplementary days are not dated. Thus, each quarter has thirteen whole weeks, and in all the quarters the same dates always correspond to the same days in a given week in the quarter."

Other schemes containing various excellent features have been propounded, but perhaps the one just outlined is the best. In any case, among the many competitors for a prize offered by the Astronomical Society of France, M. Armelin's scheme proved successful. For, it is widely held throughout the world of science that a strictly accurate chronology, if adopted universally, would remove various anomalies in financial and commercial settlements, while simplifying the transactions of all branches of business and accountancy.

T. F. PALMER.

THE REASON

If hanging is too good for a spy, it is much too good for those who employ him—or her—and that is why they are honoured.

What is Truth?

As long ago as 1597 Sir Francis Bacon in his essay "Of Truth," wrote: "What is truth, said jesting Pilate; and would not stay for an answer." Sixteen years later Bishop Andrewes, in a sermon, said: "Pilate asked, *Quid est veritas?* And then some other matter took him in the head, and so up he rose and went his way before he had his answer. He deserved never to find what truth was."

Ever since then, and probably before, Christians have tried to make out that Jesus could have answered the question if he had been given the opportunity. Yet the story which is told in John xviii. 38, in no way indicates that Pilate was either indifferent, or jesting, or in a hurry. The evidence from Matthew, Mark and Luke shows that at his trial Jesus was given every opportunity to answer questions, but that he either chose to answer evasively or not at all. Supposing John's story to be true, the probability is that Jesus acted on this occasion as contumaciously as on the others. And the inference from this is that Omniscient Omnipotence (in the shape of his son) didn't know how to answer the question, or else that he preferred to leave humanity in the dark.

It seems likely that this story was responsible for much of the mental obfuscation exhibited by philosophers during the last few centuries whenever it came to a discussion of the question, "What is truth?" Even to-day those who have suffered the disadvantage of religious teaching, find it difficult to give intelligible answers to questions of this sort. The ultra-religious, being unwilling to think for themselves, will sometimes refer you for an answer to John xiv. 6, where Jesus says, "I am the truth." But while such metaphors may be poetic, they are valueless as a practical answer. Imagine the surprise which would be manifested in a court of law if a witness, having been asked whether he knew what the truth was, were to exclaim, "Jesus Christ!"

Luckily Freethought has rid many people of the delusion that the Bible is the be-all and end-all of wisdom. To such people, questions like, "What is truth?" "What is beauty?" "What is evil?" do not present the mystically metaphysical aspects which confuse the minds of those steeped in supernaturalism. They are beginning to see that, since it is impossible to formulate or solve problems of this sort without words, the primary difficulties which have to be overcome are linguistic. The question "What is truth?" takes the form of "What meaning do I attach to the word *truth* when I use it?"

Before proceeding to deal with *truth*, however, let me illustrate the difficulty of attempting to answer the question in its original form by asking an analogous question. How would you attempt to answer the question, "What is weight?" Would you refer me to a dictionary, or to the Department of Weights and Measures? I hope not. For that would not be answering the question yourself. Would you fetch a pair of scales and some weights, and then tell me that each weight is a weight? I hope not. For I would reply, "The question I asked was not 'What is a weight?' but 'What is weight?'" Would you be able to produce any object, or essence, or anything at all, and say to me, "That is weight." Of course you would not. For the fact is that there is no such thing as weight.

In the end you would probably get somewhat impatient, and tell me that weight is an abstract term, or an abstraction. Whether you would be able to explain what you meant by an abstraction, I do not know. Most people use hundreds of abstractions in

their ordinary conversations. But I know of no school in the world where children are taught the nature, the functions and the limitations of language. Consequently most people are quite ignorant of the proper uses of the one instrument which they use most often in their daily lives—the instrument of language.

Yet there is no mystery about these words called *abstractions*. They are, without exception, nothing more than linguistic devices for shortening or condensing speech. Just as a sign in shorthand is a device for condensing a number of long-hand letters, so an abstraction condenses into a single word what it would take an ordinary person several long sentences to describe. Unfortunately most people, when they use a noun, imagine that there must be some *thing* to which that noun corresponds in reality. This is called hypostatization, or the hypostatic fallacy; and it leads to such foolish ideas as that "heat" is something which can be extracted from objects (the old *phlogiston* theory), or that "souls" are real entities which can exist independently of the body.

Once we have thoroughly grasped the fact that abstractions are merely short-speech terms, and do not represent real entities, most of the difficulties which beset the so-called problems of metaphysics vanish into thin air. The question, "What is truth?" has to be answered as though we had been individually asked what we meant by the word—not as though we were expected to indicate some *thing* and say "That is truth." And since the meaning of the word may differ for different persons, the only answer that can be given here is my own particular meaning.

First of all, then, I will point out that *truth* is a word in the English language. When I speak of a *truth*, I refer to a particular kind of statement. But when I speak of *the truth*, or just plain *truth*, I use the term as a linguistic device which enables me to say briefly what would otherwise need to be explained at much greater length. And the following is the shortest explanation which I can give of the term as used in this latter sense.

Speech makes use of certain forms of words called *statements*. Now unless a statement is expressly declared to be otherwise at the time it is made, it always purports to be the verbal equivalent of some fact of experience. But although it always purports to be so, examination often shows that it is not so. Thus we may find a statement in which there is no correspondence at all between the words used and any sort of fact. We also find statements which only correspond in part to some fact; and we find others that correspond exactly. In so far as a statement corresponds to the facts which it purports to describe, so is that statement said to be *true*. In so far as it does not correspond, so it is said to be *untrue*. And for convenience of speech we also say that such statements either "have truth," "have some (or a little, or much) truth," or that they "have no truth."

It is clear, then, that when we speak of the truth—such as statements are said to "have"—we are not referring to some *thing* which can be removed or extracted from anything. We are merely providing a short-speech name for the varying degree to which the words of a statement may correspond to the facts that they purport to represent. Even when such a phrase is used as "We must get the truth out of him," it is no more than an abbreviated form of the sentence, "We must force him in some way or other to utter statements that correspond to the facts which we believe he has experienced."

It should be particularly noted that it is only *statements* that can be said to have or to lack truth. This cannot be said of such verbal forms as questions, com-

mands, exclamations or suppositions (including beliefs, inferences, theories and guesses). Confusion in argument frequently arises in regard to the latter group, which are sometimes spoken of as being true, untrue or partly true. For a supposition (belief, etc.) does not purport to describe a fact; it merely describes an idea which may or may not be proved true by *subsequent* events. At the time when a supposition is made, therefore, it is neither true, nor untrue, nor partly true—it is uncertain. A supposition may at some future time turn out to *have been* correct; but it may also turn out to *have been* incorrect. And when the events occur which serve as proof one way or the other, then the supposition ceases to be a supposition any longer. What *was* a supposition, is *now* a truth, an untruth or a half-truth.

It will be seen, therefore, that there is really no mystery at all about the question, "What is truth?" The chief obstacle to an intelligible answer is what I called the hypostatic fallacy. This leads us to begin the process of investigation at the wrong end. We start out with an assumption, namely, that *truth* is some independent thing which can be investigated by itself. And since this assumption is false, we naturally come to a dead end before we have properly begun, since there is no such *thing* to investigate. The fallacy is largely prevalent owing to religious habits of thought. For we are taught by religion to assert that a belief can be true; and we are also taught to regard abstractions as realities. But once we have rid ourselves of this error of thought and speech, and realize the linguistic nature of the problem, we are enabled to deal with such questions logically and to give answers that are both intelligible and useful.

Philosophers, priests and the like, who talk of "the Truth" as though it were something that exists of itself in the shape of an Ultimate Value (or what not), are merely beating the air. On precisely the same grounds, and with just as much logic, one might discourse upon "Untruth" as an Ultimate Value. The fact that the latter begins with a negative prefix does not affect this contention; since, if that be the objection, we are still left with the term "Falsity." All these terms are abstractions, and as such they are meaningless except they be used in connexion with the concrete examples from which they are derived. And the concrete examples, in the case of truth, are specific statements whose correspondence with fact can be tested in reality.

C. S. FRASER.

Prophecy

THE story of this feature, in the wide, transcendental sense of the term, forms one of the more dolefully interesting chapters of human history. The germ doubtless appeared in the Stone Age, as the practice is now common among uncivilized peoples. Augury from the activities of birds, beasts, etc., is world-wide, and is applied to a variety of problems, such as the result of doing things, going—to places, the course of disease, and so on. A reported case of another kind from Zululand is that of prediction through the mouth of the shaman or witch-doctor. The "spirit voice" was rather like that of a child, and was held by an anthropological observer of the proceedings to be a clear case of ventriloquism.

In ancient Egypt, where the shamans so markedly developed into a powerful priesthood, such prediction became intensified. Oracles arose and multiplied, especially under the priestly dominion of the twenty-first dynasty. Among the ways in which the gods gave replies to enquiries (which were written as well as oral) Maspero includes voices, actions and signs, and believes that wooden figures with movable arms and a head that could nod were worked by the priests. The bull Apis was a renowned oracle, its answers being actions, such as

which of two chambers it entered, and chance utterances of children who might be around it.

The Egyptians also drew prophetic omens from prodigies. But systematic prognostication from occurrences, ordinary and extraordinary, was especially developed by the Babylonians in the course of their well-known system of divinatory inquiry. The recorded omens were drawn from the appearance of the liver and entrails of sacrificial animals; dreams; natural phenomena, such as the position and appearance of stars and planets (hence the development of astrology), eclipses, meteors, etc.; events in the lives of kings and other people; the actions of animals; and human monstrosities. Examples of the last are: "When a woman beareth a child which hath six fingers on its right hand, misfortune shall come upon the house"; "when a woman beareth a child with six toes on its right foot, destruction shall overtake the army."

Some Greeks also supposed that monstrosities were signs of events. Herodotus, the "Father of History," states, for example, that on an occasion a mare foaled a hare; and he intimates that the interpretation of this was that Xerxes, being about to lead an army into Greece, "would soon return running for his life." (This is very weak, as such a birth certainly never occurred. On the other hand, the extra digits mentioned by the Babylonian augurs are well known both in human beings). Also a section of the people—led, of course by the priestly class—adopted the method of the oracle, as, e.g., the famous one of Delphi. Herodotus relates that after a maritime engagement some battered wrecks were blown away by the wind, "so as to fulfil the oracles delivered to Bacis and Musaeus concerning this sea fight."

Roughly contemporary with the Greeks were the Hebrews, who evolved their famous system of obscurantism; and this easily passed into the more definite supernatural revelation of Christianity. As a consequence, the western world became the victim of a welter of vacuous vaticination, such as (to mention only one striking instance), "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also and the works which are therein shall be burned up." (The favourite date for this, when it had been observed that the great event did not happen in preceding centuries, was apparently 1000 A.D.).

These movements in Palestine and Greece were largely contemporary with the development in the latter country of genuine scientific enquiry; and this led to the first and apparently the only ancient instance of real, fulfilled prediction, that of the eclipse of May 28, 585 B.C. by Thales. But the scientific movement disappeared. Referring to this débâcle Dr. Singer remarks in *Science and Religion*: "So long as that idea (that in the prophecy quoted) was prominent in men's minds there could be no serious attention paid to phenomena. The 'day of the Lord' rang the death-knell of science." Thus in the western world was firmly established, along with childish credulity and general ignorance, the notion of "prophet and priest"—which, by the by, we are not surprised to see is an announced subject of imminent B.B.C. expositions.

The way was then open to practically every conceivable kind of fantastic divination and associated imposture—hydromancy, etc. (from water or other smooth surface), geomancy (from the nature and appearance of land); aeromancy (from weather conditions); cyclo-mancy and rhabdomancy (divining of water, metals, etc., by a rod or otherwise), palmistry and other fortune telling; mystical intuition, premonition and presentiment; and so forth.

But the people of the West, rising tardily from the medieval slough, again, after the lapse of some two thousand years, began to make prediction of the only real kind, the scientific, based solely on induction from ascertained facts and deduction from established principles. And in spite of the recent introduction of "free will" into the physical world (the present failure to foretell the behaviour of electrons) we still see that the whole molar world is built upon causal sequence and natural

law; that results are certain; and that, when the collected data are adequate, can be definitely predicted.

In astronomy there has been the fulfilled prediction of the existence and position of the then unknown planet Neptune from the perturbation it produced on Uranus; and in the field of chemistry the markedly successful prevision of the existence and properties of several then unknown elements from the Periodic Law of Mendeléef. A variety of biological forecasts have been equally triumphant. Of these the most significant was perhaps that made by Hofmeister, a German botanist, from the law of evolution, viz., that self-motile male fertilizing elements, such as are found in ferns and other non-flowering plants, would be found as vestiges in the lower flowering plants. Forty years later these were discovered by Japanese botanists. The structures are microscopic, and never appear outside the plant. But they are quite comparable with the vestiges of limbs of some whales (including bones, cartilages and muscles) which remain permanently below the surface, and of their teeth (the usual two sets) which never come through the gum. In the one case we are dealing with a phase in the evolutionary course from the semi-aquatic type (which the fern really is, as it depends on external water for fertilization) to the fully terrestrial type, and in the other with the modifications accompanying or following the change from the terrestrial to the aquatic mode of life.

J. REEVES.

Correspondence.

FREETHINKERS AND THE B.B.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I would like to express my appreciation of your unremitting efforts in the cause of free speech, and in particular to congratulate you on your vigorous leader in the current *Freethinker*.

May I suggest that now would be an opportune moment for you to urge every Freethinker to write (a) to the B.B.C., (b) to his Member of Parliament, (c) to the daily press, and (d) to the Wireless League or any other listeners' organization to which he may belong, complaining of this vicious broadcast censorship which is steadily debasing the intellectual currency of the nation.

It is unlikely that (a) will produce any results, but if M.P.'s find that large numbers of their electors are energetically opposed to the present B.B.C., immunity from control they will take action rather than jeopardize their chances at the next election. Moreover, if the popular press, always anxious to play to the gallery, discovers that its readers are keenly interested in the matter, it may supply the necessary publicity to compel a complete overhaul of our broadcast system, so that the Corporation may be made answerable to the people through the medium of Parliament, as one would expect in a country that claims to be democratic, instead of having its colossal power abused to satisfy the political and religious whims of an irresponsible dictator.

H. T. BUCKLE.

CAN RELIGION CAUSE INSANITY?

SIR,—I perused with considerable interest the article, by Mr. C. S. Fraser, in the *Freethinker* of March 11, 1934, but, although I agree with his general attitude towards the views of the Christian alienist, Dr. H. I. Schou, there are certain of Mr. Fraser's statements which I cannot endorse. In my estimation, he has generalized too much, and made observations which are too sweeping.

"The brain," stated Mr. Fraser, "is a material part of the body, and as such it can only become diseased through material means. . . . Religion and Atheism, however, are general terms which refer to ideas, beliefs, theories, etc., which are not material things. It is therefore as impossible for them to effect" (affect?) "the brain materially as it is for patriotism, socialism, or mathematics to affect the stomach. . . . Another proof that religion does not cause insanity is the fact that millions of people are religious, but they do not all be-

come insane. . . . What is most irrational in the mind comes to the surface most readily when the brain becomes diseased. And in civilized communities the most irrational body of ideas is contained in religion."

Personally, I look upon Man as corresponding to Bain's description, viz., "a double-faced unity." I recognize that though, in common parlance, we talk of "mental" causes in contradistinction to "physical" ones, we are unable to analyse a mental cause without taking into account a physical basis, whether the cause be internal or external. I recognize, too, that the "cause" of no phenomenon can be really one-sided, and that the possibility of insanity depends upon the medium as well as the influences brought to bear.

That many cases of insanity follow or are co-incident with injuries to the brain, and that definite influences of a "physically" morbid nature account for other cases, I must allow. But, is it not passing strange, assuming that "mental" influences are of no account, that argumentation can increase the tenacity with which insane ideas are held? and that the study of mathematics or of unexciting history often tends to cure insanity?

Mr. Fraser seems to have omitted to take notice of the emotional element in religions. Atheism is essentially cold and logical. An original gullibility, and, later, an excess of emotionality in relation to logicity, are frequently concerned with insanity. It is, of course, true that all religious persons do not become insane; but that is because they tend to keep their religious notions in logic-tight compartments and refrain from making the mystical ideas involved bases of everyday conduct. If a religionist were to carry his professed beliefs and incentives into ordinary life, he would be viewed as insane by the vast majority of professed believers, as well as by Freethinkers. Some historians would have us believe that in ancient times and in the Middle Ages there was, on the part of most persons, *complete* belief in religion; but are not the facts significant that, unlike Giordano Bruno, who had no expectation of an immortal crown in recompense, persons willing to undergo martyrdom for their religions were rare, and that national changes on a wholesale scale from—say Romanism to Protestantism, and from Protestantism to Romanism, were the rule?

Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes declared: "Any decent person ought to go mad, if he really holds such and such opinions. It is very much to his discredit in every point of view, if he does not."

As a general rule, insanity is preceded by marked predisposition, often of an hereditary nature. Fear, fright, rage, grief, jealousy, excessive mental application combined with anxiety, and religious excitement are "exciting causes," and whether the insanity takes the form of mental agitation or mental depression, or both, depends mainly upon the mental constitution of the sufferer. Mental conflict can be a stage on the way to insane assumption, and my work as a practical psychologist affords me abundant evidence that imminent insanity can often be aborted by measures of a genuinely analytical nature (not Freudism) in association with constructive treatment of frequently hypnotic character.

J. LOUIS ORTON.

THE EVIDENCE FOR GOD.

SIR,—Like the modern Christian who, owing to the spread of Freethought, has been compelled to discard most of the definite and absurd attributes of his God, Mr. Sadler evidently still finds it necessary to "stand in awe" of something. So he provides us with a God, which he carefully refrains from calling "God," but which, like the Christian God, is a mere conglomeration of hypothetical abstractions.

Again, like the Christian, Mr. Sadler conveniently puts his blind eye to the telescope (or microscope) which provides him with the evidence for his God. He selects the facts which enable him to paint a picture of his God in the brightest colours. And having done so, he presents it to us with the label, "the process of evolution UPWARD, the Push-Up of One Infinite Life, the One Mind-energy." (The plethora of capital letters is, presumably, meant to be awe-inspiring!)

Yet, when I take as wide a view of the universe as possible, I find as much evidence for a Push-Down, or a Push-Backward, or a Push-Sideways, as I do for a Push-Up. Also I see as much Death as Life; and rather more Mindless-Inertia than Mind-energy. As for the "Love-Verve which now emerges in all loving hearts"—what of the Hate-verve which seems to be blossoming so profusely nowadays? The fact is that all views about the "direction" or "purpose" of evolutionary processes are purely theoretical and supposititious. Of course, if Mr. Sadler likes to stand agape at certain parts of these processes, he is perfectly welcome. Personally, rather than "stand in awe," I prefer to try and understand unemotionally.

C. S. FRASER.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON.

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.40, Paul Goldman.

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

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Sunday, 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.

INDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, Hall No. 5, 79 Bedford Road Clapham, S.W.4): 7.30, Mr. S. Rubins (The Socialist Party of Great Britain)—"Socialism and Religion."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D. Litt.—"The Policy of Peace."

STUDY CIRCLE (N.S.S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, March 26, Mr. A. H. Millward—"Religion in Spain To-day."

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Reggiori's Restaurant, 1 Euston Road, opposite King's Cross Station): 7.30, Annual Dinner. Non-members invited, 5s. No tips, any dress, some talk.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Independent Labour Party 133 Forest Lane, Forest Gate End): 7.30, Mr. W. J. Greenhouse, B.Sc.—"Science and Superstition."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Cobden Hall, Cort Street, Blackburn): 6.30, Members' General Meeting. Business very important. 7.30, A Lecture by Mr. Jack Clayton or H. Turner (Burnley).

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Godwin Commercial Hotel, Godwin Street): 7.0, Members meeting to discuss Annual Conference. All please attend.

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. Jack Clayton—"The Old Old Story."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Debate—"That Scottish Nationalism will Rehabilitate Scotland." *Affir.*: Mr. J. McCormack, M.A., I.L.B. (Organizing Secretary National Party of Scotland). *Neg.*: Mr. J. McLeod, M.A., Ed. B. (Organizing Secretary Workers' Educational Association Scotland). Chairman—Ernest Greenhill. *Freethinker* and other literature on sale at all meetings.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Dramatic Performance.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Islington, Liverpool, entrance in Christian Street): 7.0, W. L. Owen—A Lecture. Will all interested please note that this is the last meeting of the Winter Session.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (The Picture House, Market Street, Manchester): 7.0, Mr. Chapman Cohen (President of the N.S.S.)—"Is Christianity Played Out?" Doors open 6.30. Reserved Seats 1s. each.

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Plymouth Chambers, Hall 4, Drake Circus): 7.0, A Review of the Session closing to-night.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Rooms, Green Street): 7.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton—A Lecture.

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