

THE FREETHINKER

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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

| | Page |
|--|------|
| <i>Religion and Reason.—The Editor</i> - - - - | 193 |
| <i>Telling the Tale.—Mimnermus</i> - - - - | 195 |
| <i>Religious Stunts.—C. S. Fraser</i> - - - - | 196 |
| <i>The Gospels as Biographies.—W. A. Campbell</i> - - - - | 197 |
| <i>Passion Week.—William W. Harvey</i> - - - - | 202 |
| <i>Japan's Established Faith.—T. F. Palmer</i> - - - - | 203 |
| <i>The Mythology of the Hot Cross Bun.—Arthur Haslam</i> - - - - | 204 |

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

Views and Opinions.

Religion and Reason

WHAT is the cause of the attachment that so many display—in public—to the term “religion?” Why, after having rejected all that really constitutes religion, and having professed the desire to be guided solely by scientific methods and conclusions, do we find the same people either trying to establish a “rational” religion, or claim to have a religion of their own? It would seem that if one is really without religion, and intelligently so, elementary honesty would lead one so to state his position that it would give rise to no misleading conclusions on the part of others.

The answer to this question involves the investigation of a very lengthy chapter in human history. It will be remembered that I defined religion as consisting in the belief in supernatural beings. This is the one thing in which all the religions of the world agree. Religions may differ in a variety of beliefs and customs, but the point of general agreement is reached in the belief in the supernatural. Gods differ in their shape, their power, even in their duration, but in these respects they differ as men differ from each other. Gods are made in the image of men and they have the character of their creators. Gods are the thought-children of the race, and their vitality depends upon the clarity and the strength of the thought-forms that give them birth. And when men cease to believe in the gods, the gods cease to exist.

Our Heredity

With most “damnable iteration” I have from time to time dwelt upon the fact that all offences against the gods, offences such as have come down to us in the survival of blasphemy laws, or other laws for the protection of religion, are, primarily, matters of social defence. Where, as in early society, everything is dependent upon gaining the good will of the gods, and where offending them may jeopardise the health of the tribe, or ruin the harvest, or bring about defeat

in battle, there is precisely the same justification for punishing the unbeliever as there is for punishing people who so act that they are exposing individuals or communities to disaster. To sap belief in the gods, or to affront them is equal to a man scattering disease germs in Fleet Street. In such circumstances the unbeliever is a social pariah. He is marked as standing apart from his fellows on the most vital of all questions. He is as obnoxious as a pro-German was in 1915, and as unpopular as was a leper in a medieval village. Disbelief in the gods of other peoples may be expressed, doubt as to their greatness is perhaps expected, but to question the gods of your own tribe is something that “simply is not done.”

At a further stage of social development, opposition to one god is made in the name of another, and the deposed god may be reduced to the level of an evil spirit, or he may be abolished altogether. And for a very long time the rejection of one god continues to be made in the name of, or in the interests of, another, the Mohammedan god in favour of the Christian one, the Roman Catholic deity in favour of the Protestant God, the Presbyterian deity in favour of the Baptist deity, and so forth. But to be without a God altogether; that is the terrible thing! To say, “I do not believe in your God,” with the implication that one still has some sort of a God for presentation when required or to say, “I do not believe in your religion,” again with the implication that, for public purposes at least, one still has a religion, saves one’s face. But to say plainly and deliberately, “I do not believe in a God of any kind, I have no religion of any kind” to say this in the simplest possible language, and without the slightest equivocation, implies a degree of mental clarity and moral courage, of which but a minority of people are capable. It is to be able to stand alone; and how many can do that? Where all the foxes have tails, how many can bear to be without some spinal elongation? It singles one out for dishonourable mention, and as the subject of a social boycott that most men and women will risk everything to avert. Genuine independence is still something that one must pay for, and there are not many who care to indulge in that extravagance.

So the Chesterfieldian unbeliever who is of the religion of those avowedly “sensible men,” who do not say what their religion is, discovers that he is out to reform religion, to purify religion, to rationalize religion, in short, to do anything rather than to make the plain statement that he is without religion himself, and he thinks that the world would be better off if all men were to follow his example.

* * *

Our Rightful Aim

Now I do not believe that it is the rightful work of the disbeliever in religion to purify religion, or to make it rational. If that is the proper aim, then there

are scores of churches that one may join, and so help the parson to get on with his job. Besides you cannot make religion commendable to the properly educated reason. You may make religion a little less definite in its form, and for those who admire the clarity of a London fog that is something. You may make religion a little less openly troublesome, but you cannot make it fundamentally useful. You can express religious ideas a little differently, borrowing the language of science and philosophy to do so, but you cannot alter the real character of religious beliefs. You may even adopt the theory, now advanced by some religious anthropologists, that primitive ideas of God are in fundamental agreement with those of the "advanced" religionist. I can agree with that, only I would read it the other way round, and say that the most advanced ideas of God are in fundamental agreement with those of the savage. And although the two statements *look* identical, the religionist is too artful to have it expressed in that form.

So I say that the work of the true reformer is not to rationalize religion, but to end it. I say that his real task is not even to attempt to prove that he is fundamentally at one with his religious neighbour, but to show that he is in complete and fundamental disagreement with him. I do not think that it is a good policy or a wise policy for the Freethinker to work for a time when Christians and Freethinkers may settle down comfortably together. I believe that his real task should be to work for a time when there are no Christians to settle down with. Our work is not to make religion rational, but to make it impossible.

The best way to do this is for the Freethinker to stand on his own feet. The measure of the real respect that the Freethinker will get from the religious world, will ultimately depend upon the amount of respect he has for himself. If the other foxes *will* wear tails, there is no reason whatever why a man who is born without one, or who has lost the one he had, should acquire an ornament that adds nothing whatever to his dignity. Of course, as I have said, this involves a man's learning to stand alone. At the best it will mean that he must be content with the company of a few; but in this matter one has to decide whether one wishes to be in front or to be with the crowd. The certain thing is that one cannot be in front *with* the crowd. Above all, if we really believe in the value of truth-speaking, and in the importance of marrying language to exact thought, we must see that our terminology is as free as possible from misleading connotations. There is plenty of liberal thinking about to-day; our growing need is for exact thinking; and when we have achieved this, the courage to express it without hesitation and without ambiguity.

* * *

Reason or Logic?

A final word may be said on the use of the words "rational," and "Rationalism" in connexion with belief and disbelief. Differentiation on these lines is quite unwarrantable. The comment that you cannot argue against the use of reason without depending upon reason, and so destroy your case, is at least as old as the time of Socrates. It is idle for the "Rationalist" to say that the Roman Catholic does not believe in "Reason," because he starts from a different premiss, or reaches a different conclusion from himself. He might as legitimately accuse a man of not being subject to physiological laws because he does not believe in their existence, or that he does not exemplify them because he has an impaired constitution. The real complaint against theologians of all kinds is not that they have refused to reason, or that

they do not believe in reason, or that they have not tried to create a "rational religion," but that they have played the "merry devil" with reasoning. Even in the case of Mr. Belloc, who says quite plainly that he accepts what the Church teaches and trusts her more than he does his own reason, he is not forsaking "reason," and is no less a believer in it than is any Freethinker. He is giving a reason why he accepts the authority of the Church, and although his reason may be an illogical one, it cannot be called non-rational. It is just illogical.

There is, in fact, no essential opposition between reason, as such, and religion. The rejection and the acceptance of religion are both based on processes of reasoning. Where disbelief in religion exists the proper term, the only term that indicates intellectual clarity and straightforwardness, is "Freethought," which stands for the rejection of authority in all matters of opinion. The truth is that when we dismiss a statement as "unreasonable," we do not mean that the process by which the alleged unreasonable conclusion is reached is not identical in its nature with a "reasonable" one, but that it is illogical—either that the premiss from which we start is wrong, or that the conclusion does not follow from the premiss.

Reasoning is concerned with judgments, and judgments are concerned with inferences from given data. Here is a handful of examples:—

- (a) The barometer is falling and there will be rain.
- (b) Prayers have been offered to God and rain will come.
- (a) Rheumatism may be cured by brine baths and a carefully chosen diet.
- (b) Rheumatism may be cured by prayers offered to St. Gervase.
- (a) The Pope has been given authority in matters of religious belief by God Almighty.
- (b) No man is entitled to claim authority where religious belief is concerned.
- (a) In the face of what is known of the nature of procreation a Virgin Birth is impossible.
- (b) God Almighty, with whom all things are possible, may cause a Virgin to give birth to a child.

So one might continue. But will anyone indicate where the one set of propositions dispenses with reason, while the other uses it? Or can anyone show that there is less reason employed, or less dependence placed upon reason in the one case than in the other? In each case we start from a given premiss—*i.e.*, the power of a saint or the virtues of medical treatment—and we proceed to a conclusion and then state a judgment. We may have false premisses, and then our conclusions are bound to be wrong, or we may have sound premisses and proceed illogically to a false conclusion. But to say that A believes in reason, and B does not, on no other ground than that different conclusions are reached, or in the premiss with which each starts, is absurd. One might well paraphrase a well-known saying, "Oh, reason, what absurdities are committed in thy name!" Reasoning may be good or bad, but its operations cannot be denied in any case where the expression of a judgment is concerned.

So I do not complain of Roman Catholics, or of the followers of Mrs. Eddy, that they refuse to reason, or even that they refuse to trust their reason, because both these statements are fundamentally untrue. My objection to both is that their reasoning is bad, it is illogical, the premiss is not warranted by facts, or the conclusion does not follow from the premiss taken. The circulation of the blood is just as true when the blood flows freely, as it is when it has to force its

way through a constricted artery; reason is none the less reason because in the one case it proceeds logically, and in the other case illogically. A man who, as we say, refuses to reason, "is only reasoning that it is unwise or dangerous to follow other courses than that of silence, or verbal accommodation."

The Freethinker who says to the Roman Catholic, "I believe in the supremacy of reason" is really saying nothing at all, unless he adds, "and my reasoning shows me that your belief is quite false." But in that case he is avowing himself to be a Freethinker, and is accusing the Roman Catholic of bad reasoning. And, once again, those who properly recognize the nature of intellectual progress will see to it that the terms we use lack as little as possible in the direction of clarity of meaning and definiteness of application.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Telling the Tale

"Christianity has never lost the instinct of universal dominion."—*Bible Society Report.*

"We shall never enfranchise the world without touching people's superstitions."—*G. W. Foote.*

To the meditative mind there is no more suggestive reading than a list of names of note. We can well understand the sober joy of the old Puritans, who, taking their Christian Bible seriously, loved to grapple with the lengthy genealogies of Israel and Judah. Even a gazeteer is a mine of suggestion, and in a London directory you can lose yourself—among the strange lanes from Pie Corner to Hanging Sword Alley. There are attractions in a railway time-table, which conjures up visions of old-world towns and pleasant places around the coast-line of our country. To a bookworm like myself there are possibilities in most unlikely publications, and two old reports of the British and Foreign Bible Society caught my eye and my modest purse on an open-air bookstall. One bore the title, *Deep Calleth Unto Deep*, a delightful nautical alternative to its companion volume which was entitled, *The Book and the Sword*. In the piping times of peace less attention is paid to naval and military titles, and less insistence is laid upon the alleged warlike character of the Christian Bible, which is often referred to as the work of the "Prince of Peace." However, variety is the spice of life, and these reports cover so wide a field that it should appeal to the taste of the jaded Freethinker, bored to distraction by the many financial appeals from the churches, chapels, and tabernacles of the many sects of Christendom.

The editor of these reports, a brilliant journalist, relieves the monotony of his plaintive appeal for cash by introducing quotations from all sorts and conditions of authors, some of whom one hardly expects to find in a pious work of this kind. Pronounced Freethinkers such as Balzac, Heine and Montaigne are dragged in by the heels to bolster the cause of the Christian Superstition, and even Victor Hugo is laid under contribution. Apt quotations are made from demure Jane Austin to "that little ape called Keble," as grim old Thomas Carlyle dubbed the author of *The Christian Year*. These elegant extracts are used with the commercial skill of the patent-medicine advertisers, who attract readers to their pills and potions by all the resources of literary artifice.

As an example of the up-to-date method of conveying information, one may refer to the statement that in the years under consideration the Bible Society issued a total of so many millions of Bibles and portions of Scripture in so many languages. This, it will be seen, is a decided mixture of smart business

and oleaginous piety, but the reader must remember that these reports are in the nature of business prospectuses, and that plain instructions as to legacies and the payment of cheques and money orders are given in detail. In previous years the public used to be informed courteously that Royal and princely personages were interested in this society's work, but in these democratic days such "illustrious obscure" names, as Shelley calls them, have mysteriously disappeared. Obviously, the ex-Kaiser is less important now as a patron than in the high and palmy days when he lorded it over the German people, and so many Kings are in exile.

Despite the modern business methods, there is an old fashioned theological flavour in the report which is reminiscent of the far-off days of John Wesley, and the early corybantic days of Methodism. Listen to this account of an alleged convert in the Old blood-and-thunder style perpetuated by the Salvation Army and other howling Dervishes of Orthodoxy:—

Shortly before Christmas, the Bishop of South Tokyo confirmed forty-five Japanese in the pro-cathedral at Tokyo. One of them had just undergone fifteen years' penal servitude for deliberate murder, committed when he was a youth of nineteen. He looks a pretty good ruffian, but he is a dead-keen Christian.

To such a litterateur as that editor, it is surprising that he did not quote Byron's sarcastic lines describing a similar crook:—

"The mildest-mannered man
Who ever scuttled ship or cut a throat."

The purple passages, however, are the best in the books. With what art does the editor describe the awful dangers and risks of a colporteur's life:—

We hear of one man pelted in Egypt, another arrested in Italy, and another imprisoned at Athens. In Ceylon one colporteur had to hide from a wild elephant in the forest at Trincomalee. In Peru a colporteur was attacked and beaten by a fanatic. Several of our men were both robbed and beaten in China, and one was in danger of being shot as a spy.

It will be seen that "god's messengers" got off very lightly, and their experiences were not to be compared with the really terrible times of Austrian, German and Italian Socialists. The most heroic action, however, was not performed by a man, but by an Englishwoman, who, in the touching words of the report, "was not afraid to sell farthing vernacular 'Gospels' in the streets of Lahore."

The reports of the colporteurs are full of literary surprises. In a restaurant at Rome an agent was selling Testaments, when a man took up one and said: "I have never seen this book before. Do you know the best book I have ever read? It is *The Imitation of Christ*." After further protracted conversation the matter ended in a purchase by this phoenix of culture who had read Thomas à Kempis, but never had seen a copy of the Christian Bible.

Ingersoll said that when a thing was too stupid for the present-day pulpit, it was passed on to the missionaries. The truth of this jest is seen in the account of the work in China (of all places), where copies of *Genesis* and the *Book of Jonah* were sold and even expounded. This happens, be it noted, at the very time when the preachers at home are laying their hands on their hearts and assuring their innocent congregations that the book of *Genesis* is but an early edition of *The Origin of Species*, without the tiresome details of Charles Darwin.

These colporteurs are as resourceful as they are brave. In France, for example, they sometimes meet men with philosophical opinions, and with a distressing habit of expressing their opinions freely, so unlike the very respectable English people. The report

adds that to quote the religious faith of a man like Mr. Lloyd George often serves as a decisive argument to disarm the Freethinker. The naughty man who admires the writings of Anatole France is thus crushed to pulp. After this encounter, one fancies he buys a big family Bible for Madame, his spouse, and one tiny gospel each for the children, while he himself turns to the *Petit Journal pour Rire* for consolation in the day of defeat. Unfortunately, all people are not so polite as the French. In Burma the people lack culture, and the report assures us that the colporteurs are "often reviled with words too coarse for translation." It is "too deep for tears," but "Satan" is still having his innings. Some awful Italians, lost to all sense of decency, actually described the work of the British and Foreign Bible Society as "a bottega, a money-making concern." It looks as if Vesuvius will soon be working overtime, for such remarks are very near blasphemy.

Although not by any means a centenarian, I have known these Bible Society's reports for far more years than I care to remember. When I was a small boy, with ambition to become a pirate and sail under the Jolly Roger, the hair-breadth and thrilling adventures of the brave colporteurs filled me with boyish envy and despair. They were to me, in those far-away days, what the desperadoes of the Pacific Coast are to the young cinema fans to-day. Now, I have parted with much of my hair and many of my illusions, my dear old colporteurs are still hard at it, telling the tale, pocketing the pesetas and other coins at the peril of their lives and their sacred stock-in-trade. It is pleasant to find old friends still living in a world of perpetual change. Such bravery deserves recognition, and I note my colporteurs do not work for nothing as about £50,000 goes their way annually. They earn it, for they add to the gaiety of a nation.

MIMNERMUS.

Religious Stunts

THE DUKE OF ARGYLL is shocked at what he calls the "stunts" that have recently taken place in the Cathedrals of Liverpool, Bristol and Exeter. In a violently damnatory letter which he addressed to the Rev. G. H. Dymock, vicar of St. Bede's, Fishponds, Bristol, he wrote as follows: "The misuse of our English Cathedrals, such as is shown by recent scandals at Liverpool and Exeter, and now at Bristol, is reaching a deplorable state of abuse. . . . There is no need for foolish stunts to fill our ancient Cathedrals. If our Bishops would only attend to their proper business all would be so much better."

The question arises, of course, whether these so-called "stunts" are not in fact the "proper business" of Bishops. A comparison between the priestly stunts of former days and those of modern times fails to disclose any very remarkable difference. Indeed, if anything is to be said one way or the other, one must admit that the stunts of to-day are milk and water affairs as compared to the old ones. And that is not so much for want of trying on the part of the clergy. It is due to the unfortunate fact—unfortunate from the Church's point of view—that the public is becoming more educated and humane.

When Christianity was at its height, the turning of ordinary bread and wine into real flesh and blood was a commonplace and everyday affair. Even to-day we have images that weep tears of blood (or perhaps they merely sweat blood), as well as consecrated wafers which ooze blood (or perhaps they merely become bloodstained). Anyhow, blood used to pop up or out in all sorts of miraculous ways. Then

again there were other bloody stunts, such as the burning of witches and heretics, which were also commonly adopted as entertainments for the amusement and edification of the righteous.

Admittedly the latter were not practised *inside* the Cathedrals. That would have been asking too much of God. But they usually took place as near to any available Cathedral as possible, with the full and benign sanction of the local Bishop and clergy. Nowadays, the best that the Bishops seem able to do in order to attract congregations is either to get qualified heretics to preach, or else to adopt some mild form of heresy themselves. For the noble Duke refers in his letter specifically to the "vapourings by the Bishop of Malmesbury on Socialism and Communism," and he mentions that too many Bishops "take up with any passing quirk and mania."

Of course the idea at the back of the modern Bishop's mind is the same as that which prompted the stunts of his earlier brothers-in-God. What they all wanted, and still want, is money, more money and yet more money. Not that they ever admit this to be the reason for these stunts. Nor that their equanimity is ever disturbed when this true reason is plainly seen by important members of their Church, like the Duke of Argyll. They still continue to blather about following in the footsteps of their poverty-loving Leader (Jesus Christ), who blessed the poor and declared that the rich would not be able to enter Heaven. In the good old days, however, things were much simpler. They just burnt the heretic and appropriated his goods. To-day they have first to collect the congregations, and then to collect the collections. No wonder that, the old methods being no longer possible, the poor Bishops are driven to think up new stunts of a type more acceptable to the "goose that lays the golden egg." And what could be more thrilling than to pose as "heretics" themselves, in the safe knowledge that they will neither lose their jobs, nor get grilled at the stake.

Yet sad to relate, even stunts of this sort seem to misfire with the modern public. For in the same letter the Duke of Argyll said, "we heard only two weeks ago that the bulk of the Cathedrals were practically not paying their way and were bankrupt." It seems as though neither heresy preached by the orthodox, nor orthodoxy preached by "heretics," is of any practical value in these times as a magnet for the shekels. Frankly, we cannot agree with the Duke in attributing this state of affairs to the practice of stunts. For that has been the habit of priests and witch-doctors, and medicine-men in every kind of religion. And as a rule it has been eminently successful, both to impress the gullible public as well as to mulct it of its hard-earned cash. No, the real reason for the bankruptcy of the Churches is the increase of education and the decrease of credulity. Stunts, or no stunts, the common people no longer swallow the fairy-tales of religion as they used to. It is natural, therefore, that they should cease to pay for what no longer amuses them.

But if we may make a suggestion—without any hope that our suggestion will be acted upon—there still remains one very effective "stunt" which is open to any Bishop or priest to practise in his Cathedral or Church. And we guarantee that if they were to practise it, they would attract the largest congregations they have ever had in all their experience. The "stunt" we suggest is that they should *tell the truth about religion!*

C. S. FRASER.

OUR NEIGHBOUR.

A neighbour's fire is our own; therefore his welfare is not very far from our welfare.

The Gospels as Biographies

In his *Black Girl in Search of God*, Mr. Bernard Shaw has a good deal to say about Jesus. He has so much to say that I was tempted to inquire of him if he derived any of his information from sources other than the Gospels. To this the great man graciously replied that he had "not gone outside the Gospels for his authorities on Jesus, whose views on property and criminality are still beyond the average European"; and that he had "dealt with the subject very fully in his Preface to *Androcles and the Lion*. Of course, the "Jesus whose views on property and criminality are quite beyond the average European," is none other than the image of Mr. Shaw's own ideal sociological self; but what is surprising beyond measure is the fact that the delusion of the originality of Jesus's views on property or criminality or marriage or anything else appears to survive among many of the intelligentsia as tenaciously as the belief in his virgin-birth and physical resurrection survives among that class of persons who would turn their God into a sort of second-rate conjuror. *Magna est illusio*.

If so enlightened a Rationalist as Mr. Shaw can make such a wild statement, what may we not expect from the less enlightened! It may, therefore, be not inappropriate to examine just exactly what the Gospels do tell us about Jesus and his views.

First of all, it is to be noted that the framers of the New Testament canon were so little concerned about historical facts that they placed, side by side in the Gospels, "Luke's" and "Matthew's" accounts of Jesus's birth, although these are directly contradictory, entirely irreconcilable (no matter how ingeniously you "re-interpret" them), and are based on definitely contrary suppositions.

Further, "Luke's" account (which is clearly designed to outdo the pagan mythologies in their own special line of theogonies and to present a birth-story more wondrous and striking than any contemporary literature could afford) is sharply and brazenly contradictory of the most incontestably known facts of history. Such a preposterous arrangement as is related by "Luke," whereby Joseph and Mary both had to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem for census-enrolment, would have disrupted the Roman Empire, and is directly contrary to the highly rational (as was to be expected of Roman administration) regulation, still to be read in Papyrus No. 408, British Museum, which required all to be "at their own hearthstones" on census-day.

Now, if these Birth-stories are pure fictions, albeit perfectly honest fictions, where then is the reason for supposing the alleged career or life-story of "the Jesus" (for thus is he referred to in the Gospels) to be less fictive? Can any sober-minded man or woman regard as historical a life-course consisting practically wholly of miracles and marvels, and a few sermons made up of the "current coin" (Renan's phrase) of Jewish religious, moralistic, and ethical thought, and a few delightful parables in the well-beaten track of Jewish Haggadic and Midrashic tradition?

What are the related facts (*sic*) of the Jesus's life? He performs the usual quota of miracles of healing, etc., in the approved fashion of Asklepios ("saviour of all men," as he was called) and other saviour-gods. He preaches and teaches in the manner indicated above. He commissions Twelve or Seventy to spread his "gospel," threatening the most terrible punishments on those who do not receive his messengers and their message. (Concerning that world-shaking and reforming mission, the only account that has come down to us is that the missionaries' report: Master . . .

even the devils were subject to us; to which the Jesus replies: I saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven!)

According to one Evangelist only, the Jesus restores to life Lazarus who had been dead and buried for three days. (Concerning that stupendous miracle-climax of Jesus's career it is deeply instructive to note how the ablest and fairly conservative scholarship deports itself. Dr. W. Lock (*A New Commentary*, p. 260) says: "Its insertion here may be compared with that of the Transfiguration in the Synoptics, each dwelling on death and a life beyond death." (Note word "insertion"; it is as if one should speak lightly of "inserting" the trifling incident of the Battle of Waterloo in a Life of Wellington!)

At Cesaræ, Jesus performs a most extraordinary miracle, which, if interpreted literally, is the most childish and preposterous miracle-story ever related, and is wholly beneath consideration. Well might the Professor of New Testament Exegesis in the University of Oxford exclaim in despair: "All possible difficulties seem concentrated in this story of the Demoniac of Cesaræ." Interpreted literally, of course.

Towards the close of his career the Jesus also curses and causes a fig tree to wither—the fact that this priceless incident is recorded by all Evangelists (unlike the raising of Lazarus which is recorded only by one) indicates that it was regarded as important—and when the disciples express astonishment, Jesus simply replies: Have faith in God.

Finally, Jesus gets into some sort of clash or conflict—there is no clear, consistent indication as to what really was the trouble—with the Jerusalem and/or Roman authorities, and is arrested, but refuses to plead before the trial-Judge. In answer to the perfectly straightforward question: "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus makes the by-no-means straightforward reply: "You say that I am." He is condemned and put to death—and a more purposeless martyrdom is not recorded in human history. Jesus dies a violent death, is martyred, not for any great and noble cause, which we are able clearly to recognize—as millions of men have been—but for no better reason, apparently, than that a violent and not a natural death is required of him. If he had to die for the salvation of men, why should not a natural death (which could have been followed by a resurrection) have been as effectual as a violent one? Jesus then rises from the dead in the approved legendary fashion of dying and rising saviour-gods, after (about) a 36-hour sojourn in a Jerusalem grave, and "straightway" floats up to heaven after spending a few hours only on earth, according to one account, or, according to another account supposed to be written by the same author, remains on earth for forty days, and then floats up to heaven, a cloud hiding him from view.

* * *

Is there any leading personality in history who was engaged for one or three years in any sort of public career about whom we know less than we do of the Gospel-Hero? The absence of almost everything which can properly be called biographical detail is in truth the most striking and significant fact about the Gospel-story. The most (apparently) vivid biographical detail of Jesus's life is his abuse of the Scribes and Pharisees in the Temple which is almost unequalled for savage violence and injustice. (Curious that the Twelve remained on, peacefully preaching the Resurrection, for half a generation, in this nest of "vipers" and "serpents," and never once got bitten by them). The plain, simple, ungarnished truth is that we know as good as nothing at all about the Jesus, the Gospel-Hero, even though Mr. George

Bernard Shaw affirms that his views on property and criminality are beyond the reach of any modern European—and, I suppose, American.

I referred above to the preaching and sermons of the Jews as the "current coin" of the religious world of his day. In this connexion, however, it is worth noting that the scholars who really know something about the Jewish originals of 99 per cent. of the Gospel-ethic (such as Moore, Yaluda, Herford, W. B. Smith), have made it clear that the moral tone has suffered loss, in some cases, in the transfer from Hebrew original to Christian record, although the literary form and style are invariably improved, which is evidence, not of the higher ethical value of Jesus's preaching and teaching, but of the fact that the Evangelists were superb artists.

If, as it is claimed, Jesus were the "express Image" of God, a complete revelation of His Divine Mind and Character, then the Gospel-writers were the most incompetent and dull-witted biographers who ever lived. One might reasonably have expected the Evangelists who tell us that Jesus taught love and forgiveness of enemies, to have thought it worth while also to have told us how Jesus exercised his Divine love and forgiveness in his attempts to save Judas from his hot place in Hell and History. But no. Judas's treachery is foretold, his doom pronounced and sealed, and everybody goes on his way as if nothing at all had happened. As the account stands, it is the last word of utter callousness and casualness. Yet these biographers take pains to relate how a legion of demons recognizes and acknowledges the Jesus's divine nature (whereupon they are ruthlessly disposed of by being transferred to a herd of swine which rushes down a steep place into the sea); they relate how the Jesus curses and destroys a fig-tree; how he abuses, shamefully and unjustly, Scribes and Pharisees, whose point of view he does not appear to have taken the trouble to try to understand with sympathy or insight, let alone with divine love; they record a saying of the Jesus about giving to those who have and taking from those who have not, which has been employed to justify the worst social evils and injustice. Why multiply instances? If it be insisted that the Jesus was the perfect and ultimate revelation of God, then, of course, all this, and more (some of which is even worse) is perfectly all right! But—it is utterly incredible that divinely inspired men should have lived one or three or more years in the most intimate contact with the "express Image" of God-head, and have related his life-story in such a farrago of miracles and marvels and sayings, which sayings are neither above nor below the level of the age, as the eminent scholars and historians who really do know something of the first century—as distinct from the journalists and journalist-theologians who do not—assure us. These Evangelist-biographers deserve more censure for their incompetence than poor Judas for his (imaginary) treachery. Romanticize, sentimentalize the Gospels how you will, Bultmann's dictum stands firm: *The character, the personality, of Jesus are for us no longer knowable.*

This is the negative side of the criticism. There is, of course, a positive and constructive side, but until the glaringly obvious and patent fact is recognized and admitted that in the New Testament (which in its present form is derived from manuscripts, the oldest of which are as late as the third and fourth centuries, and which in turn are translations and copies of older documents which have passed through many and varied vicissitudes of ecclesiastical censorship and over-writing) we do not possess the material for a life of an individual Personality, and that the Gospels are not biographies—until that fact is squarely faced, it is

impossible to proceed with the symbolic interpretation of Primitive Christianity,* and to assess its influence for good and ill.

W. A. CAMPBELL.

Kingston, Jamaica.

* It has been my unique privilege to read the typescript of Dr. W. B. Smith's (so far) unpublished work, *Transfigured, Crucified, Enthroned*, in which he has, with prodigious learning and profound insight and intuition, developed the theory that Proto-Christianity was originally a monotheistic mission, and "the Jesus" of the Gospels none other than the "highly idealized universalized, spiritualized, PERSONALIZED Israel-race, God's agent for the salvation of the world from idolatry"; and that the anonymous Evangelists fashioned their Hero from Old Testament prophecies and Pagan models. (See Dr. Smith's essays, "Milk or Meat?" in *Hibbert Journal*, April, 1933, and "Transfiguration" in *Literary Guide* (London), July, 1933.) When a first-century Hebrew used the phrase "Son of God," he meant just what Ezra meant when he said of his people Israel: "*We are Thy Folk, Thy First-born, Thine Only-begotten, Thy Beloved*"; he did not mean anything so crude as a son of Jhwh, conceived by the Spirit of God, and born of a human virgin-mother. And so, when the primitive Evangelists and missionaries of the monotheistic crusade against pagan idolatry spoke of God's "son" redeeming the world from sin, they originally had in mind an "idealized, universalized, spiritualized" Israel; and it is this Israel-Folk which later became personalized as "the (God-man) Jesus." This, in the main, is the Thesis of Dr. Smith's book, the *magnum opus* of the "Symbolic" or "Radical" interpretation of the Gospels.

Biographical Note.—Dr. William Benjamin Smith is Professor Emeritus of Philosophy in the Tulane University of Louisiana, New Orleans: author of *Der vorchristliche Jesus* and *Ecc Deus*: eminent mathematician, and contributor to scientific and philosophical journals in England and America.

Acid Drops

Our old friend the *Clarion* is now a sort of weekly *Herald*, published by the *Herald's* proprietors. The problem which the old *Clarion* had to face was a serious one which is shared by all periodicals which have to choose between principles and popularity. We should all like to have "the largest circulation in the world." The *Daily Herald* has secured it by suppressing any principle which might impede the increase of its circulation. The *Clarion* once obtained a large support because its first editor had a personality of unswerving devotion to some basely slandered causes. While we are sorry to see the fall of what once was deserving of honour, we need not worry over a new addition to an already vast list of papers like the *Herald* and the present *Clarion*.

The *Clarion* in its new form contains, of course, a "Hannen Swaffer" article. Equally, of course, he is more Christian than Socialist, in his insistence that Socialism is "Christian in ethic." Swaffer must be under the impression that the Roman Empire was run by an early Lenin. Surely it is only in a Soviet army that Mr. Swaffer would approve Christ's insistence that soldiers should be content with their wages (Luke iii. 14). Mr. Hannen Swaffer may repudiate the Pope's declaration that Socialism is unchristian, but the Pope is the mouth-piece of most Christians. The entire Christian Church has opposed Socialism, Chartism and other organized attempts to give labour its due, while it could. We recommend Mr. Swaffer to read the chapter on "Christianity and Labour," in the editor's book on *Slavery*. Not that merely reading will teach writers who believe that Christ taught "the elimination of human selfishness and personal advantage"! Christ's essential teaching was that individuals should regard their own personal salvation from eternal hell as their main concern in a world which was of no importance because it was shortly coming to an end.

In the *People* old lies about Abraham Lincoln are revived by Mr. A. J. Russell (of the Group Movement) in the first of a series called "Religion of the Great." Landseer's *Dignity and Impudence* is recalled by the respective pictures of the great infidel, and the modern "Grouper." Responsible biographers agree that Lincoln had infinite contempt for preachers, he abstained from church-going all his life, and himself wrote "an infidel work," denying the essential doctrines of Christianity. The New York *Truth Seeker* has frequently had to refute baseless accusations of religion made by Ministers against Lincoln. Mr. W. H. Herndon (Lincoln's law-partner from 1843 till Lincoln's assassination) has often put on record the fact that "Lincoln was an infidel of the radical type bordering on Atheism: he never mentioned the name of Jesus except to scorn and detest the idea of miraculous conception." Dean Paradise, of Christ Church Cathedral, New Orleans, agrees that "the note of personal responsibility was never absent from the speeches: not even Providence could relieve him of that burden." Mrs. Rose Strunsky, a later biographer testifies that "Lincoln was brought up amongst the sceptics. . . he read Volney and Paine. . . As late as 1854 he made Herndon erase the name of God, which he wrote in a speech. In his race for Congress in 1847 he was accused of being an Atheist, a charge he never denied. 'He would die first,' he said."

Mr. James Douglas thinks that the Rev. "Dick" Sheppard would be the ideal successor to Dean Inge at St. Paul's. "He would be," cried Mr. Douglas, "a glorious Dean of St. Paul's. His spiritual power would irradiate the Church of England and help it to be our pacemaker as well as our peacemaker." On the other hand, the *Church Times* devotes a long leader to Dr. Sheppard, recalling his "impatient parson" deploring "a gibe Dr. Sheppard retails at the most sacred of Sacraments, which from the pen of a priest is really intolerable." This most Christian paper is very angry with him, and ridicules his suggestion that "everyone should be religious in his own way," irrespective of whether it is God's way or not, which could rope in Buddhists, Moslems, and Unitarians; and it insists that "Christianity stands or falls by the Deity of Christ." The *Church Times* does not like Mr. Sheppard, Mr. Douglas would not agree with its estimate of Christianity as being exclusively Anglo-Catholic and possibly Mr. Sheppard would agree with neither. What happy families these Christians make!

M. André Malraux telegraphed to Paris the other day that he had found the site of a city which may be that of the Queen of Sheba, in the grand sandy desert of Southern Arabia, and one of our national papers followed this up with a portrait of the Queen, which was just as authentic as the portraits of Solomon painted by pious Victorian artists. The truth is, of course, that if there is any real evidence for the existence of either Solomon or the Queen of Sheba, it has never been found outside the pages of the Bible. Everything relating to both, as with almost all the Biblical heroes and heroines must be believed in on *faith* in the truth and integrity of the Bible, commodities which are shrinking in proportion as the Holy Book is scientifically studied. Have any relics of Solomon been discovered anywhere?

In a review of Prof. Lloyd Morgan's latest work, *The Emergence of Novelty*, a very religious critic actually uses the work to abolish evolution altogether. He says scientists are not in agreement as to which of the higher primates is most nearly related to man, and he adds that, "it can be safely asserted that evolution, as a confident description of the actual past history of the universe or of life on this planet, was never so obviously without foundation as it is to-day." "Safely asserted" by whom? Some Anglo and Roman Catholic priests and their most ignorant followers; the Salvation Army as a whole; and Fundamentalists everywhere. No scientific man or instructed layman anywhere denies evolution; the evidences are overwhelming, and to go back to

Genesis as a true history is to substitute sheer ignorance and credulity for knowledge. Christianity can never again put the clock back.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, whatever he may say or think about helping the unemployed here in England, is an out and out believer in missions and missionary work. He is in thorough sympathy with the money spent in training natives to teach Christianity than which, he recently declared, "there was nothing of greater moment for its future." A new cathedral has been built at Dodoma, in Yanganyika territory, and the S.P.C.K. devoted £100 of its funds towards the building and received the benediction of the Archbishop for showing such practical sympathy, and also for distributing Christian literature in the vernacular. Hundreds and thousands of pounds are annually spent in the propagation of Christianity among natives, who don't want it, who don't understand, and who, as a rule, become morally worse for having it. And our Archbishop blandly approves while millions of our own people are either starving or on the verge of starvation, or living in slums and misery. And the extraordinary part of all this is that the Christian poor themselves *agree with the archbishops!* Their pence help to swell missionary funds. It is amazing.

A writer in the *Christian World* asked a group of children, "If you had lived in the time of Christ, how would you have known Him if He passed by?" The unanimous answer was, "Because He always dressed in white." Some of us would expect to find him wearing a halo; others perhaps a crown of thorns (according to the hymn which asks, "Hath He marks to lead me to him?") But amongst all the fascinating figures presented to us in 1934, it is remarkable that no Christian writer dares to suggest that Jesus would perform a miracle under test conditions. Most of us would recognize a God immediately He re-animated the population of a well-established old cemetery; or performed some other ridiculous unnecessary and ghastly "divine" act. If "He" spoke, wrote, or acted wisely, usefully and beautifully, we should know at once that "He" was only a human being.

For once the Christian moralists are going to start where charity is said to begin—at home. The Christian Social Council Committee on Gambling has secured offices in Westminster. The official announcement proclaims that the C.S.C.C.O.G. (what an alphabet!) will begin with "the process of educating the churches." If it means what it says (we know the churches too well, not to be highly sceptical) the long line of letters will have to add many more to its title before anybody succeeds in "educating the churches." But, as we suspect, it simply means stirring up the Peeping Toms, and other busybodies (of which all Churches possess a large supply) to interfere with other people's amusements. In that sort of "education" the churches will learn with avidity—they love their neighbour very fervently indeed when intruding into his affairs and "doing him good" (or ought we to say doing him well?) We remember a cartoon in an American paper representing two clerical critics of certain illicit resorts. One was saying to the other "I feel like enjoying myself to-night: which Den of Infamy shall we go and expose?"

The centenary of Rev. C. H. Spurgeon affords Christian journalists an opportunity to glory in the persuasive charm of a very voluminous sermonist. The *Christian World* describes him as the "Prince of Preachers." We are by no means indifferent to the admirable straight, plain language and geniality of this popular apostle. Most of these editorial encomiums ignore the essential fact: Spurgeon was an honest purveyor of a nonsense he and his vast congregations implicitly and explicitly believed in. It is ridiculous to imagine that Dean Inge and Bishop Barnes are less intellectual, or that Gipsy Smith is less plain-spoken, or that Woodbine Willie got less near to the common man's phraseology than Spurgeon. Science, Bible criticism,

and the contempt everybody feels for an utterly insincere pulpit-oratory are incompatible with the creation of another Spurgeon. The mob may not have reached a high intellectual altitude, but it realizes that Calvinistic theology is dead and buried. Spurgeon taught it because he believed it. To-day the preachers who teach it (in its most diluted form) have great difficulty in restraining their own laughter or the contempt of those who hear them.

"That the soul is immortal needs no proof," says the Rev. Joseph Fort Newton in his "Every Day Religion" column. As all who believe as the Rev. Doctor does, define a soul as "the immortal part of man," his confidence is justified. It is like saying that a brass monkey is brazen. The "proof" that is needed is proof of the soul's existence; its immortality is easy enough to swallow if we find the soul first. Dr. Newton, in the same column, explains why immortality is requisite. "The vast beneficent Power which made us what we are," he says, "will bring us to what we ought to be." We imagine that even immortality itself will not be long enough, in some cases, to accomplish so gigantic a task.

Is there anywhere a picture of Jesus that is really like him? To this enquiry a pious writer replies that "No man can say." This is a trifle too dogmatic for our liking. It would be nearer the truth to say that all the pictures of Jesus are really like him—to exactly the same extent as the statues of the gods of the ancient Greeks and Romans were really like those gods. It is quite easy to produce an accurate portrait of a god when the only source of information is a myth—because no one can say it isn't like him.

Apropos of Christian union, the Bishop of Chester told the Free Church Council, in assembly at Birkenhead, that each body of believers has got some valuable truth, and some day, he felt sure, they would all hold the same truth; but that day was distant. The Bishop should have found a moral here for the edification of his audience. He might have pointed out how wonderful it was that God's revealed truth, although it was supposed to unite all men as brothers, had most successfully separated them into warring camps.

The Free Church Council is determined to put a stop to serious crimes like those "surprise packets" one purchases mostly at Church bazaars. You pay sixpence, dip your hand into a barrel of sawdust and out comes—well it may be something worth less than sixpence. "Draws and raffles" must be put down with the strong arm of the law. The audience listened with bated breath while spell-binding parsons eloquently denounced the awful consequences of "games of chance." Actual examples of murder and brigandage were not given, but Dr. Vincent Shaw of Hereford seemed to sum up the epitome of all possible wickedness with the climax—"even counting how many currents there were in a bottle." No, surely, not that, "EVEN" that.

At Stirling the Methodists have introduced the Cinema into the Sunday School. "Travel, education and humorous films are shown." The *Methodist Recorder* tells us that, "since the Children's Cinema was started the membership of the Sunday School has increased by fifty per cent." Better than a Punch and Judy show or a Conjuring Entertainment no doubt.

The Rev. Henry Carter and the Methodist Churches are busily engaged in the congenial work of fighting Mr. Lockwood's Licencing (Standardization of Hours) Bill. Mr. Carter says the Churches "owe Mr. Foot (M.P.) uncommon gratitude." That all the good people in England should oppose wickedness is natural enough. But is it so evil a thing to standardize all over the country the hours in which grown-up people may purchase the beverages they desire? Christians have long enough pretended that an act perfectly innocent on Monday is a

crime if committed on Sunday. It is merely an extension of the same illogicality to claim that so terrible a crime as purchasing a bottle of Bass at 9 p.m., becomes a greater offence before God and man (if the Rev. H. Carter is a man) after 10 or 11 p.m.

Mr. Hugh Redwood, who is a "Groupist" and editor of a daily newspaper, tells us that Jesus gave him "a journalist's job to do. He put me on to the biggest story any man could ever have." Mr. Redwood does not indicate which story he refers to. The story of the "Flood" is pretty good, so is "Jonah and the Whale," but there are many others which while quite as incredible are very much more unseemly (to put it mildly). But the "biggest story" of all must surely be that the Christian scheme of Salvation by faith is the urgent need of destitute slum-dwellers. Mr. Redwood says, "I love the little halls in the slums where the keynote is 'I do believe that Jesus died for me' . . . Salvation must be put first and last. We have to win the soul of the slum-dweller." A fine key-note for the editorship of a 1934 London newspaper!

The Rev. "Joe" Broden is the Dan Leno of the Ministry to-day. He opens his addresses by some such witticism as "I'd better start at once as I don't want to drive you to drink." He admits that, "we are often humbugs and hypocrites, using religion as a cloak . . . but think of the apostles, the saints, the martyrs." We do. And as the American wit said, "the more we think of them, the less we think of them." We appreciate Mr. Broden's fun, but not his own "humbug and hypocrisy," as instanced in the following choice sample of his "religion as a cloak": "It was men and women of the Christian Church who freed the slaves and extended the franchise . . . You would not have any democratic ideal or any liberty to talk about but for the Christian Church." We offer our columns to Mr. Broden to substantiate his ridiculous inaccuracies.

Another queer reading of "history." Mr. J. M. Murry, a "sort of" Freethinker (and, of course, a sort of Christian too), tells us in *The Adelphi*: "Christianity in its early days was a momentous life-advance." As this is quite meaningless the phrase may be true. Constantine's "life-advance" was "momentous" enough. The dupes who believed they could really enjoy dying because of what Mr. Murry's journal calls on another page, "Pie in the Sky," experienced a different "life-advance." And what can we say of the editor's view that "If Christianity called upon wives to be subject to their husbands, it was because it had first made them equal with their husbands"? It is what G. K. Chesterton would probably call a paradox. Others would call it sheer idiocy.

Fifty Years Ago

THE LAY OF THE SAVED.

My iniquities once were as black as the night,
And like crimson they also were red;
But now, praise to the Lord, like wool they are white,
For Jesus has died in my stead.
I am meek as a lamb and have altered my ways,
For I once, I admit, was a hot'un;
But no merit is mine, every bit of the praise
I ascribe to the Only Begotten.

Now I pray like a good'un, my Bible I read,
And I sing the Lord's praises all day;
Like the psalmist I find the Lord's words and I feed,
And my banjo and fiddle I play.
Believe, brother, and come unto him, do not doubt,
Trust the promises, think not they're rotten;
Then so happy, together we'll joyfully shout—
"Hooray for the Only Begotten!"

The "Freethinker," March 30, 1884.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL:

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

Telephone No. : CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

- R. K. NOYES (Boston, U.S.A.)—Many thanks for cuttings.
- MR. JOHN ROWLAND writes—"I should like to congratulate you on your series of articles defining terms, etc. It is something which needed doing, and I am sure that you are the man to do it." Thanks, the older we get the more convinced we are of the importance of clear thinking. It is a labour that only the few will endure, but in the long run it tells.
- L. MAINES.—It is not really a question of whether this or that does good, but which does the greater good. Mental courage is not quite so infectious as cowardice, but, still, it is "catching."
- J. JACOBS.—Pleased to hear from you. Hope you and your wife are the better for the voyage.
- MR. E. CHINNERY writes to say, in reply to our answer to him in this column, that he did not wish to imply any opposition to freedom of speech or criticism. What he intended to state was that the Soviet Government was the only one that had the courage to crush religious interference in the government of the country. In that case our difference with Mr. Chinnery disappears. We wish that our own Government had the courage to expel religion from all its departments. The secularization of the State is one of our leading principles.
- The "Freethinker" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to this office.*
- Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.*

SPECIAL NOTICE

On and after March 31st, the offices of the National Secular Society and the Secular Society Limited, will be removed to:—

68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

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

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

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

Sugar Plums

The Manchester Branch brought its season's lecturing to a triumphant close with a crowded audience in the Picture House on Sunday last, to listen to Mr. Cohen. Every seat was occupied, and people were standing at the back of the pit and balcony. Unfortunately some had to be refused admission, as there was not even standing room for them. Mr. Monks occupied the chair, and made a strong appeal for members. There was also a brisk demand for Mr. Cohen's new book, *Letters to a Country Vicar*. This promises to be one of the most effective of the author's writings, and we commend it to all who wish to give a Christian friend an introduction to Freethought.

There is just time for either members or Branches of the N.S.S. to send in resolutions for the Annual Conference Agenda. But they must be sent in at once.

We strongly advise all who wish to possess a copy of Dr. Dorsey's *Civilization*, to send at once. It is a history of civilization that we heartily recommend. The book extends to nearly 1,000 large pages, it is well written, scientific in its scope and Freethinking in its outlook. And when this supply is exhausted no more can be obtained, save at the full published price. The book is published at 15s. net. It is being sold by the Pioneer Press at 7s. 6d. postage 9d. extra.

Mr. W. Steinberger, an old reader and ardent supporter of this paper writes:—

The least that your enthusiastic readers can do to help you spread the light is to get the *Freethinker* into as wide a circle as they can. I suggest that all your readers who can afford a small monetary sacrifice adopt the plan I intend to adopt. I am going to arrange with a newsagent (open-air pitch) to display a bold poster advertising the *Freethinker*. I am going to pay for twelve copies weekly, and he is to sell them and pocket the threepence per copy. If he can sell more, he is to get them on the usual trade terms. I will encourage him in his own interest to make his best effort.

We are obliged to our friend, and hope his excellent plan will produce results. As a matter of fact, some of our friends in different parts of the country already act on the lines suggested by Mr. Steinberger. And those who cannot guarantee the sale of twelve copies, might guarantee a smaller number. The plan is certain to work for the paper's influence, and there was never a time when the need for uncompromising Freethought was greater than it is to-day.

Miss Anna May Wong, the well-known Cinema star, is the last one to cancel an engagement to speak before the microphone, because she will not submit to the censorship of the Parson-Admiral-Colonel trio. We congratulate Miss Wong, and hope it will have the effect of stimulating others to decline to place themselves under the tutelage of an intellectual nobody such as Sir John Reith, and to help in foisting an imposition on the public. There is little use in talking about freedom and democracy while lending a hand to one of the most cowardly forms of censorship that exists anywhere.

But Sir John Reith has found some friends, apart from those behind the scenes. The Annual Meeting of the Congregational Union passed a resolution expressing its confidence in Sir John, and also its thanks, for "the way in which he has maintained our religious witness over the wireless." And he has done it in the usual way, by excluding everything that would contradict the "religious witness," or enlighten anyone as to its real worth.

In order, we presume to impress the world with its liberality, the B.B.C. announces that during April and May four talks will be given—one by a Spiritualist, one by a Unitarian, one by a Theosophist, and one by a Rationalist. We do not know who the Rationalist is who will speak, but as the talks will be passed and edited by the B.B.C., it is tolerably certain that no thorough-going criticism of Christianity will be permitted, and the listener is likely to find himself treated to a number of very harmless platitudes and moral maxims with which many Christians can agree. What we have already said of these talks applies to these four. Until men firmly resolve not to submit to the censorship of the B.B.C. they are helping to perpetuate a censorship of the worst kind. Any speaker who is genuinely representative ought to at least be trusted to put his case without the tuition of Sir John Reith. If he cannot be trusted thus far, then he has no right to speak in the name of any body of men and women.

To those who would like to get a little inside knowledge of what Nazism and Fascism generally means in operation, the nature of its international operations, and its threat to the whole of modern civilization, we would commend the reading of *Hitler Over Europe*, by Ernst Henri, 5s. Much of the book has appeared in the form of

articles in the *New Statesman* and the *Spectator*, but it is more than welcome in this enlarged form. Fascism has been called a return to feudalism. As practised in Germany, and as it would be here if it ever gained strength, the statement is a libel on feudalism. *Hitler Over Europe* depicts the transformation of Germany into a slave state to which the nearest analogue is the huge slave masses of ancient Egypt driven to their tasks under the lash of the whip. How this is being done, how the men behind Hitler have diminished the number of the unemployed by reducing large numbers to starvation, the work of Hitlerism in other countries, is very tellingly narrated. The whole reads like a realization of one of Mr. H. G. Wells's forecasts, in which he depicted the whole of the working class reduced to a state of hopeless slavery by the conspiracy of a handful of "overlords," whose power is maintained by the ruthless terrorism of bands of mercenaries. For some reason or other, our press is now silent about these developments in Germany, as they have been silent about the situation in Italy.

It is worth bearing in mind that there is a German Nazi Press Bureau in London, in touch with the English Fascists, and visits are arranged between German and English university students; English students are given fifty per cent reduction on German railways. Generally, we welcome this interchange between peoples. But those who appreciate the quality of Fascism everywhere, and its aims, will note the facts. And there is behind this movement plenty of money.

The Blackburn Branch N.S.S. appears to be doing some very useful work with a Discussion Class on Thursday evenings and Sunday evening lectures, both held in the Cobden Hall, Cort Street. A recent paper by Mr. J. Sharples, the Branch President, and Mr. H. P. Turner's lecture were special features. We congratulate the Branch on its success in getting the *Freethinker* in the local Public Library. Attention is directed to the Lecture Notice column for further announcements. Unattached Freethinkers in the district are invited to get in touch with the local secretary at the Cobden Hall.

A meeting of Sheffield Freethinkers for the purpose of forming a Branch of the N.S.S. in that city is to be held at 31 Sherrington Road, Highfields, Sheffield, on April 5, at 8 p.m. All sympathizers are earnestly invited to be present. We hope there will be a good response, and that a Branch will be formed. Anything we can do to help will be done. If necessary, we would go to Sheffield at an early date for the purpose of setting the Branch on its way.

THE NEGLECT OF THINKING.

Every man knows there are evils in the world which need setting right. Every man has pretty definite ideas as to what those evils are. But to most men one in particular stands out vividly. To some, in fact, this stands out with startling vividness that they lose sight of other evils, or look upon them as the natural consequences of their own particular evil-in-chief.

To the Socialist this evil is the capitalistic system; to the prohibitionist it is intemperance; to the feminist it is the subjection of women; to the clergymen it is the decline of religion; to Andrew Carnegie it is war . . . and so on *ad infinitum*.

I, too, have a pet little evil, to which in more passionate moments, I am apt to attribute all the others. This evil is the neglect of thinking, independent thinking, hard thinking.

You protest. You say men are thinking more now than they ever were. You bring out the almanac to prove by statistics that illiteracy is declining. You point to our magnificent libraries. You point to the multiplication of books. You show that, beyond a doubt, people are reading more now than ever before in all history. . . . Very well, exactly. That is just the trouble. Most people, when confronted with a problem, immediately acquire an inordinate desire to "read-up" on it. . . . [But] did it ever occur to you to think?

Henry Hazlitt ("Thinking as a Science.")

Passion Week

THIS is the week, my children, in which our Lord gave himself over to bitterest passions, after keeping his temper for almost three years, during which he was teaching his followers how to control their own passions by emulating his loving "heavenly father."

By the way, one must not get this heavenly father, whom he described and pictured in parables—such as the Prodigal Son and the Good Shepherd—mixed up with Jehovah. They were no more alike than molasses and vinegar. Of course molasses sometimes sours in hot weather when it gets too thin—but that has nothing to do with the story of how Jesus, on passion week, seemed to forget for a time this heavenly father so frequently compared to a much improved *earthly* one.

And, when you come to think of it, might it not have been *just* that? Joseph had been dead for some time; and I have imagined that he must have been a mighty likable old sport for the tolerant way he took with Mary in that "Holy Ghost" episode.

Anyhow—as I started to say—Passion Week is made very much of by the Church to-day because it unquestionably proved Jesus to be a real son of man with guts enough to tell the cheap sharpers and fakers of the temple just where they got off, emphasizing his remarks with a cat-o'-nine-tails. Some of the things he said doubtless wouldn't bear repeating in this age, but enough got by to show that our preacher of love towards enemies, forgiveness seventy times seven, and non-resistance of evil, certainly got slightly "het" up at the time.

We might also mention that strange fig-tree incident, as happening on the same morning that he beat up the temple crowd, except that Christian theologians have ruled that it *couldn't* have happened, therefore it *didn't*, in spite of the record, which says it *did*, and adds for emphasis, "His disciples heard it."

About this time Judas naturally made up his mind he couldn't stand for these outbreaks against law and order in his own home town, and decided to go over to the constituted authorities. We can't blame him much for this, and most hard-boiled church members would back him up to-day, such is the remarkable change Christian thought has wrought on the hearts of men. The early Church writers, however, told several nasty stories about this upright gentleman, which, although differing materially from each other, must all be true.

It is recorded that as soon as Judas went out to report to the authorities, Jesus gathered his little band together, and, finding they hadn't very much money, told them to go out and pawn their shirts—or sell their coats—and buy swords. This pleased the fishermen, who had never possessed real swords, and they began to brag what they would do. They would lay down their lives for him.

But when these same disciples were asked to stay awake on guard duty, they went so sound asleep that their loud snoring doubtless led the Roman soldiers to the gate.

Jesus was trapped and there was nothing for him but voluntary surrender. Poor Peter, however, got the surprise of his life when, half awake, he made a fierce lunge with his sword—chopping off an ear!

"Put up again thy sword into its place," firmly and perhaps somewhat scornfully came the voice of the Master, who in these words, and in this unparalleled dramatic setting doubtless uttered the most significant words that ever fell from his lips: "For all they who take the sword must perish by the sword."

At this "they all forsook him and fled," as well they might after putting up such a miserable defence—but Peter, we read—the same Peter who had recently been given the keys to the golden gate—head of the present True Church of Christ Militant—"followed him afar off."

And next morning, coatless and shivering about a tiny blaze outside the court, with a dishonoured sword dangling hopelessly by his side, our disappointed hero declared with an oath, "I never knew him."

The rest of the story of Passion Week may be told briefly. Railroaded through the courts, Jesus, according to the record, was ready for execution by noon-tide, hung to the cross where he remained for about three hours. We have somehow got the idea that the cross was something like a gibbet and killed quickly, but Roman history tells us a quite different story. It doubtless seemed an unheard of procedure that his friends asked that he be taken down the same afternoon. Pilate "marvelled," as well he might, that his victim "was already dead," but he didn't care about killing him anyway, and a rich man and a politician can do wonders.

Jesus was put into a new tomb Friday night and came out some time Saturday (making three days and three nights, of course), according to the testimony of some rather irresponsible Roman soldiers and a woman of ill-fame of whom we have no subsequent record.

But we have already left "Passion Week," and are now dealing with "glad Easter morn," which is another story. They tell us that the Christ burst forth "clothed in effulgent light." Well, he had to have something to cover his nakedness, for Peter saw the "grave clothes lying."

But why in the name of all that is holy did Mary Magdalene mistake him for the gardener? Why, again, did he leave Jerusalem the same afternoon, still in disguise? And why, oh why, did he protest to his frightened disciples, "A spirit hath not flesh and bones as I have?" Apparition indeed! As they say in America, Hooey!

WILLIAM W. HARVEY.

Japan's Established Faith

THE national religion of Japan is not Buddhism, but the cult of Shinto. Shinto means *The way of the genū or spirits*. Transfigured in several ways by later Buddhistic and Confucian accretions, the cult still remains for all practical purposes a primitive mode of ancestor worship.

This system is assuredly not seriously entertained by the cultured classes who are mainly Agnostic or Atheistic in opinion. The revelations of modern science have made a deep impression on the public mind, and as a result of the influence exerted on young Japan by Lafcadio Hearn and other Western interpreters, the philosophy of Herbert Spencer and John Stuart Mill was widely welcomed in the land of the Rising Sun. An acute and materially minded people, the Japanese sometimes take advantage of the educational facilities afforded by Christian missionary colleges, but the number of genuine converts to the cult of Christendom remains negligible, for European faiths make little appeal to a community that regards the doctrine of the atonement as repugnant, while the missionaries are well known to be the paid agents of the various churches that employ them.

Dating from the remote past Shinto naturally preserves the impress of its lowly origin. Many deny that the cult is really a religion, inasmuch as it possesses no sacred writings and no ethical code.

Again, no other creed is strictly confined within national boundaries, while Shinto is scarcely known outside Japan. It contains no message concerning a future state beyond its bare belief in the persistence of a spirit realm. Heaven and hell are alike unknown to it. Moreover, while the world religions are theoretically distinct from the secular State, Shinto acclaim the reigning dynasty of Japan as divinely descended from the gods of creation. Yet, despite these differences, Shinto serves as the national or State religion of Japan.

Shinto has millions of minor deities. Natural phenomena, including rocks, rivers, fire and water, mountains and trees, have all their indwelling spirits. But much of its ritual and ceremonial is of extraneous origin, and Hirata reduces the primal cult to a mere idolatry, while Goh thinks that it has long since lost its primitive simplicity, and has been "corrupted by contact with metaphysical Buddhism and other neighbouring religions. The true element of Shinto is respect or reverence for ancestors or parents; and granting this, it follows that Filial Piety is its great virtue. Consequently it becomes also the chief characteristic of the Japanese people, and from this quality spring their loyalty and patriotism."

So long as a foreign faith in no way prejudiced native reverence for the dead or devotion to the divine rulers of the State, no sectarian antagonism was displayed. For, when in the sixth century B.C., Buddhism entered Japan from Korea, the Emperor and Empress, as the supreme representatives of Shinto were the first participants in its ceremonies, became its adherents and appointed Buddhist priests to high offices of State. In return, presumably for diplomatic reasons, these adopted ancestor worship. Thus, Buddhism was for a time successful. Confucianism, on the other hand possessed a philosophy more in accordance with Japanese feeling and tradition, for it taught that filial and loyal conduct constitutes the cardinal virtue of human-kind. This philosophy was widely embraced by the better educated classes as a safe guide through life.

Even when, three centuries ago, the Portuguese introduced Catholicism into Japan they were permitted to establish their Church and to proselytise the people. It was only when the priests' teachings became treasonable to the State that they were suppressed. Even then, the Jesuits' machinations provoked an insurrection in Shimabara, when Christianity was interdicted and so remained until quite recent times.

Xavier, the colleague of Loyola, in the course of his travels in the East had visited Japan, and this led to the establishment there of a Jesuit mission. And, as the late Captain Pfoundes notes in his essay on Japanese religion, there soon arose "more than a mere suspicion of a desire to reduce Japan to a dependency of Rome, or of some Roman Catholic European State, and the priests were given notice to quit; but they incited their converts to open rebellion, and forced their way secretly among the natives. Rigorous and yet more severe edicts were issued, stringent measures taken, and still the priests persevered, until extreme measures appeared to be the only means to preserve authority, peace, and national independence." The priests were therefore expelled, and the country closed to foreign merchants and adventurers. Japan then remained secluded until she was compelled by alien pressure to open her ports to the commerce of the Western World in the nineteenth century.

Reverting to our main theme, it is noteworthy that when Japanese scientists assembled at Tokio in 1890, Prof. Kato of the Imperial University repudiated the theory that Shintoism is a form of religion of "the

most important element in national thought and feeling." This opinion was embodied in a resolution carried by the votes of the eminent men present.

The Japanese term their ancient cult *Kami* ("The Way of the Spirits"), but *Shinto*, its Chinese equivalent, is the designation used by European scholars. In Shinto Cosmogony Japan becomes the world's centre. In primeval ages Japan and many of her heroes were called into being. At a later stage the sun goddess *Amaterasu* ruled mankind. This solar deity finding that the people were harassed by the perpetual quarrelling of the planetary gods whom their leader *Okuniushi* was incapable of controlling, sent forth *Ninigi*, a sky god, to Central Japan, to dismiss the incompetent *Okuniushi* from his office of god-overseer, while permitting him the less troublesome task of ruling the invisible realm, while *Ninigi* and his divine successors, the *Mikados*, were ordained to govern the visible world! The contending deities continued, however, to disturb the State until 660 B.C., when *Jimmu Tenno* suppressed the rebels, subjected the greater part of the main island to his rule, and with his warriors established his State. This traditional event marks the commencement of Japanese history and chronology. *Jimmu Tenno* has long been deified, and is adored at a thousand shrines; and from him the rulers of modern Japan derive their descent. As Mrs. Bishop ((Isabella Bird) states: "The Mikado is the lineal descendant of the gods—nay, he is himself a god and his palace is a temple."

Nearly four million deified ancestors have shrines. Every hamlet has its special divinity and annual festival. Some gods have monthly services, and on the appointed day the devout visit their shrines. When a month old every infant is taken to the local shrine, and its presiding spirit becomes the child's patron for life.

The people are seldom admitted into the temples. The spirit is assumed to be present in its shrine and the devotee waiting outside makes his presence known by pulling the cord of a metal instrument, thus causing it to sound. We are assured by one who knew the people well that: "The act of worship usually consists in clapping the hands twice, and making one or more hasty genuflections, and people make pilgrimages of several hundred miles to the most celebrated shrines to do no more than this, to cast a few of the smallest bronze coins down upon the temple threshold, and to buy a relic or charm."

The gala days of the more important gods are observed in regal style. Stately processions of cars bearing sacred emblems, and one with a maiden holding a wand in hand amid the music and dancing of the festive throng, are prominent features in these celebrations.

Simple indeed are the public observances of ordinary Shinto, and its private requirements are equally artless. Penances or self-denial are absent, but certain ceremonies are imperative. Each Shinto homestead has its god-shelf on which a miniature temple stands. Within the temple are tablets inscribed with the titles of the gods who protect the dwelling and its inhabitants from harm, as also the names of ancestors and dead members of the family. Foliage and flowers are dedicated to the departed, while liquid refreshments and cooked rice are also offered to the dead. With set of sun, little lamps are lighted in front of the shrines, and their "glow-worm glimmer" becomes a pleasing evening feature in Japanese life.

The Mecca of Shinto ceremonial is *Isé* in Central Japan, and to its temples pilgrims repair from far and near. These pilgrimages are in no way associated with remorse or repentance, but provide the occasion of constant frolic and entertainment. Indeed, these

temple visitations constitute the chief holiday of the year or even of a lifetime. In the vernal season, Shakespeare's "sweet o' the year," troops of men and bevvies of maidens arrayed in holiday attire throng the thoroughfares leading to *Isé*. With song and merriment, making obeisance to every high hill and conspicuous tree, they reach their journey's end. Then they enjoy themselves in the theatres and other places of amusement and instruction, and when they have tossed their small coins on to the cloth outside the *Isé* temples they abandon themselves to the pleasures of *Yamada*, a city far-famed for its erotic attractions.

T. F. PALMER.

The Mythology of the Hot Cross Bun

EVERY ancient civilization whose records have come down to us had its consecrated cakes. Their principal use was to placate the gods. This done, the gross material portion proved a dainty tit-bit for the abstemious priests. One of the best known illustrations is that of the shew-bread. Twelve cakes were placed on the altar daily, presumably to represent the twelve tribes of Israel. But twelve had long been a sacred number in the East; and in ancient Babylon, where the same custom was observed before it came into vogue among the Hebrews, either twelve or a multiple of that number were presented to the Deity.

These cakes were made of the finest meal, and were known as sweet cakes, holy bread, or bread of the Presence. Since the dough was very easily stamped, it soon became the custom to mould the cakes in a variety of ways, or imprint them with a sacred symbol. At many seasons this use of ceremonial cakes recurred. In Japan, it was customary on New Year's Day to offer to the God of War, who was personified by the armour of *Daimio*, a huge rice cake. And this was attended by a curious ceremony. When a cake has to be cut a bow string is employed, because to use a knife in the presence of the God of War would be too suggestive. To show the universality of such customs we may go direct from Japan to Mexico, where, during certain religious ceremonies, an image of the god, who was being worshipped, was made of dough, and divided into morsels to be eaten as a Sacrament by the communicants. This habit of stamping the cake with a figure of the god, or a symbol which was readily understood, was well nigh universal.

The use of the Hot Cross Bun on Good Friday finds its counterpart in many lands. Thus, in the Balkans, a small image of any person whose death is to be commemorated is made and eaten by the friends and relatives. So early as the time of the Sumerians, who inhabited ancient Babylonia, sacred cakes were offered to the gods, and from that time onward the Assyrians, Jews, Greeks, and others, retained and extended the usage.

One of the best authenticated cases is that of *Tammuz* and *Adonis*. *Jeremiah* tells us how "The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead the dough to make cakes to the queen of heaven."—It would seem that in some instances the cakes were twisted into long rolls named *Kollix*, whence came the term *Kollurion*. A curious fact is that in *Moab*, and near the Sea of Galilee, ruins have been found which bear in each instance the name of *Hami-el-Kursch*, or Sanctuary of the Cake. The Greek and Roman writers have much to say about sacred cakes. A curious instance of a trial in a court of judicature is on record. The first case to

came before this court was that of an axe with which one of the priests of Jupiter had slain an ox which had eaten one of the consecrated cakes. Since the ox was in those days accounted sacred, the priest had to save himself by flight, so the axe had to undergo the trial in his place.

Herodotus tells a story of the serpent which guarded the Acropolis in Athens, to which cakes made of paste mixed with honey were presented month by month. Æschylus has more than one reference to sacrificial cakes, "offered to the divinities that avert evil"—thus showing how wide and varied was their use among the ancient Greeks. There were many names for these different kinds of cakes in ancient times, and they varied, as do our simnel cakes, hopper cakes, and wedding cakes to-day.

The Sign of the Cross is by no means modern, nor is it limited to Christianity. One of the early Kings of Greece, sixteen hundred years before Christ, is said to have offered to his divinity a sacred cake made of fine meal sweetened with honey and marked with a cross. In place of this symbol the Egyptian cake bore the impress of a pair of horns, because it was eaten at the Altar, when an ox was offered; just as the wafers used at the Eucharist in the Chapel of the Burning Bush built by the Empress Helena, are stamped with a device which represents the bush which burned, but was not consumed.

When we come down to the Hot Cross Bun, we find that it is a relic of Saxon times, when such cakes were offered to Austre or Eastre, the Goddess of spring. These were stamped with the Greek cross, and the clergy distributed similar cakes made from the dough of which the consecrated host was formed for use after Mass on Easter Monday.

ARTHUR HASLAM.

Correspondence

CAN RELIGION CAUSE INSANITY?

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I have read Mr. Orton's letter carefully, but cannot find any fact stated therein which justifies his disagreement with my "sweeping observations." Indeed, I do not think there is any real disagreement between Mr. Orton's views and my own. The difference, if any, is more in regard to my terminology than to my conclusions. Nevertheless I think my terminology is less confusing than Mr. Orton's.

Mr. Orton says that I have omitted to notice the "emotional elements in religions." But my point of view is that it is not religions which can be said to have "emotional elements," but the persons who hold these religions. It is just as possible for a man to be emotional over Atheism as over Christianity. His behaviour is merely the outward expression of an already inherent emotionalism. Religion or Atheism are merely pegs on which to hang his nature.

He also asks whether it is not strange that argumentation can increase the tenacity with which insane ideas are held. My answer to this is that we have no sort of measure with which to calculate degrees of such "tenacity." It is, therefore, pure assumption to suppose (1) that the supposed "increase" is in fact an increase, (2) that the idea was previously held less tenaciously, or (3) that argumentation was the cause of the "increase," if any. Incidentally, I do not approve of such terms as "insane ideas." An idea cannot be sane or insane; these terms are only applicable to human beings.

With regard to the study of mathematics or unexciting history as a cure for insanity, I would be glad to have full and exact details of the clinical history of one insane person who has been cured by these methods.

Finally, Mr. Orton states that imminent insanity can often be aborted by measures of an analytical nature. In this case we have to assume that insanity would cer-

tainly have supervened but for these measures. I am, personally, not prepared to make that assumption; nor do I see how Mr. Orton can make it with any hope of proving it to be correct. I believe I am right in saying that in several cases where insanity was suspected, the disease became quite definite in spite of analytical treatment.

C. S. FRASER.

ON FREEDOM.

SIR,—In reply to the Editorial note to my letter in the *Freethinker* of March 18, I wish to assure yourself that I have not mistaken the point at issue, I was not concerned with the relative value of dictatorships, but with pointing out the difference between the Soviet dictatorship and those of Hitler and Mussolini. In the latter cases, dictatorship is used for suppression and oppression in the interest of those who wish to maintain Capitalism, with its wage-slavery, and prevent the upbuilding of Socialism in the form of a classless, non-exploiting society.

The Soviet dictatorship is used for the purpose of preventing attempts to undermine and destroy the work of building a society in which the fullest possible economic and mental freedom attainable, in a human society, will be ultimately attained.

If English freedom were all that it is claimed to be, the B.B.C. tyrants could not possibly have come into existence; the conditions for their public appearance would not have been to hand. The B.B.C. dictators know that the majority of English people quietly support their methods in case religion and property should be too much attacked.

Why have we to keep on fighting for certain "freedoms"—re Sunday, Secular Education, Blasphemy, and the right of full expression of political opinion? Obviously, because our freedom is not fully entrenched; it is permitted while it is not too dangerous. The hand of reaction is soon in strong evidence when exercise of freedom tends greatly towards reconstructing the basis of society.

My "cryptic" remark was intended to stress the danger of our liberty, such as it is, being taken away, by reactionary politicians and religionists, within a very short period of time.

E. EGERTON STAFFORD.

[Mr. Stafford still fails to meet the point at issue. I do not see how the character of a dictatorship can be affected by the end at which the dictatorship is aiming. Whether a dictatorship is in the interests of Socialism or Capitalism, it is a dictatorship, and it is its desirability in any form that is in dispute. Hitler and Mussolini and others all say that their dictatorship exists for the good of Society, and on Mr. Stafford's lines they are all justified—unless he argues that a dictatorship is only justifiable when he approves it.

I agree that if the British public were more alert the B.B.C. censorship would not exist. But I do not wish to get rid of this one, which the upholders say is in the interest of a better social state, in order to replace it by another which will urge exactly the same excuse. And I can, meanwhile, attack it openly and publicly and try to make the public more alert. Mr. Stafford may also publicly attack capitalism and accuse it of every crime in the calendar, and there is no law or regulation to prevent his doing so. He cannot be legally accused of treason, or "sabotage" or anything else. He is at liberty to attack the system under which he is living. And if he can persuade the people he can reconstruct the social state from top to bottom.

That is my case. Not that bigotry does not exist, not that there are not very serious obstacles in the way of freedom of speech, but that there is the right publicly to attack anything we please, within the limits of not creating a breach of the peace or engaging in personal slander.—EDITOR.]

BY SPECIAL REQUEST.

We are fond of extolling writers with a knowledge of men; but what we usually crave is our own interpretation of that knowledge.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD MARCH 23, 1934.

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

Also present: Messrs. Quinton, Rosetti (A. C.), Moss, Clifton, Le Maine, Ebury, McLaren, Mrs. Grant, and the Secretary.

Minutes of the previous meeting read and accepted. Financial Statement presented. New members were admitted to Stockport, West Ham, and Parent Society.

It was agreed to engage Mr. G. Whitehead for propaganda work during the coming summer, and various suggestions were made. Reports and correspondence were dealt with from Bradford, Stockport, Study Circle, International Federation of Freethinkers, Social Committee, and National Peace Council. The next Annual Dinner was fixed for Saturday, January 26, 1935, in the Holborn Restaurant. The Committee to examine the Principles and Objects of the N.S.S. reported progress, with the promise of a further report at the next Executive meeting. Details concerning the Annual Conference were discussed, and an Agenda Committee formed.

The next meeting of the Executive was fixed for April 27, 1934, and the proceedings closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,
General Secretary.

Obituary.

DR. ARTHUR LYNCH.

WE deeply regret to record the death of Colonel Arthur Lynch on March 25. Dr. Lynch—he held a medical degree—led an adventurous life, and both tongue and pen, as well as personal services were readily placed at the services of any Cause with which he sympathized. In the Boer War he served with the Boers, in the justice of whose Cause he, in common with large numbers of Englishmen, firmly believed. He also served with the British troops in the European War of 1914. He returned to England after the end of the Boer War, fully believing that the Amnesty covered him. But when returned to Parliament as member for Galway, he was arrested and tried for treason in 1903. He was found guilty, formally sentenced to death, but finally condemned to imprisonment for life. At the end of twelve months he was released, an act for which Edward the Seventh received the credit, but there is another side to that story, which we had from Colonel Lynch himself. In fact there is every reason to believe, and Lynch himself believed, that the whole trial was by way of reprisal for some of his earlier writings which were too courageous for English "Society."

Colonel Lynch was an outspoken Freethinker, a fact which the papers in noticing his death conveniently forgot. He wrote frequently for the *National Reformer*, and later was an occasional contributor to this paper. He was also a much appreciated speaker at the Annual Dinner of the N.S.S. He wrote from the hospital regretting his inability to be present at the last function. His writings covered a wide area, literary, scientific, and philosophic. Adventure was in his blood, and he loved, we fancy, adventure in that sphere where courage is so seldom shown, but where it is most urgently needed—the world of intellectual conflict.

MR. G. CROSS.

I HAVE to report the death of another old member of the N.S.S., a Mr. George Cross of Wavertree, Liverpool (age seventy-one years). Mr. Cross had been interested in the Secularist outlook nearly all his life, having attended some of Charles Bradlaugh's meetings in London, and had been a member of the Parent Branch for about thirty years. His death occurred very suddenly on March 17, and he leaves a widow, to whom our deepest sympathy is extended. In response to his life-long wish, a Secular Service was given as our last farewell to him. The body

was cremated at Anfield Crematorium, Liverpool, on Wednesday, March 21, the Secular Service being read by Mr. W. McKelvie.

ALEXANDER CREW.

IT is with deep regret that we report the death of Alexander Crew, late Chairman of the Swansea Branch N.S.S., which took place at Swansea on March 20, in his forty-third year. Possessing a fertile mind, sound character, and a loyalty to principles, he became an outstanding feature in the workshop, and local Freethought activity; gathering around him a circle of friends and admirers, many of whom were opposed to his opinions, but attracted by his personal charm and manly qualities. The funeral took place at Crewe—his native home—on Saturday, March 24, in the presence of a number of relatives and friends. Mr. G. A. Thomas, Secretary of the Swansea Branch N.S.S. represented the Branch. To the widow and son all will extend sincere sympathy in their great loss. He will be sorely missed in the home circle, and by his death Freethought loses a gallant fighter and friend. A Secular Service was read at the graveside by Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

The Puritan would be judged by the Word of God: if he would speak clearly he means himself, but he is ashamed to say so.—John Selden, "Table Talk."

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

OUTDOOR.

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): 3.30, Good Friday, March 30, Messrs. Collins and Le Maine. 6.30, Messrs. Bryant and Wood. Easter Sunday, April 1, 3.30, Messrs. Collins and Le Maine; 6.30 Messrs. Bryant and Wood. Easter Monday, April 2, 3.30, Messrs. Collins and Le Maine. 6.30, Messrs. Bryant and Wood.

INDOOR.

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Reggiori's Restaurant, 1 Ruston Road, opposite King's Cross Station): 7.30, Sunday, April 8, Mr. W. A. Greatwood—"The Fraud of Penitence."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Sunday, April 8, John A. Hobson, M.A.—"Democracy and Internationalism."

STUDY CIRCLE (N.S.S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, April 9, Mr. Paul Goldman—"Marriage and Morals."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Cobden Hall, Cort Street, Blackburn): 7.30, Thursday March 29, Discussion Class. Mr. J. Barnes—"Science our Benefactor." Cobden Hall, Cort Street, Blackburn, Sunday, April 1, 7.30, A Lecture.

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Sunday, April 8, Mr. Jack Clayton—A Lecture.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Rooms, Green Street): 7.0, Sunday, April 1, Mr. A. Flanders—A Lecture.

SEAHAM HARBOUR: 7.0, Wednesday, April 4, Mr. Allan Flanders—A Lecture.

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