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Views and Opinions

Christianity and Woman

I DEALT last week, in a general way, with Mrs. Northcroft's (Editor of *The Coming Ministry*) comments on my paragraph concerning the question of the position of women as taught by Christianity. I had said, in a paragraph in a previous issue, that the Methodist Conference in rejecting the proposal that women should enter the Methodist ministry, was acting in accordance with Christian tradition, and that it was part of a Christian teaching that all the evils in the world began with a woman. Mrs. Northcroft retorted that the statement might be true of the old Semitic view, that it was not true of the modern aspect of Christianity, and that there were certain broad principles laid down by Jesus Christ that made for the equality of the sexes. I do not know what these broad principles are, and therefore cannot deal with them; but the question of the influence of the Christian Church on the position of woman is a matter of historic proof or disproof, and it is on the question of fact, rather than that of theory that I am now concerned.

In its secular aspect Christianity appears in history as an heir of the Roman and—in a degree further removed—Greek civilizations. It was not an indigenous product that had to outgrow certain stages of primitive thinking, it inherited the products of an advanced civilization which had already sloughed off many primitive beliefs and practices. Roman law and Greek culture were solid facts, and their beneficial influence have endured to our own day. But the advances made under Roman rule dwindled away under Christian influences, and woman became a mere chattel of the man, without social rights once she was married, and with very few rights before marriage. The laws concerning slavery became harsher in character and emancipation became more difficult. Freedom of thought and speech died out; civilization as a whole deteriorated, and no one but a monk would have found Christian Europe in the tenth century preferable to the pagan world of the third.

And it is idle to put this deterioration down to the invasion of the barbarians. Pagan Rome had encountered barbarians in many parts of the world. But Pagan Rome civilized them, Christian Rome confirmed them in their barbarism and deepened their superstition.

* * *

Women in the Bible

The causes of the transformation were various; I am now concerned with one factor only, but this is the most powerful and the most permeative, and I intend dealing with one aspect, that in relation to the position of women. The Christians were very peculiarly "The people of a book," and in that book, the Bible, upon which they professed to base their faith, the subordination of woman to man is everywhere decreed or implied. In the old Bible woman is made as a kind of afterthought, and when made becomes the cause of man's downfall. She takes no part in any public religious service, and the old Jewish law prohibited women, along with slaves, giving evidence in a court of law. When Shakespeare makes Petruchio say

She is my goods, my chattels; she is my house,
My household stuff, my field, my barn,
My horse, my ox, my anything.

he was giving the biblical view of a married woman; and unmarried she was as much the chattel of the father as of the husband when married. Stephen in his *Commentaries of the Laws of England*, points out that the Roman law supposed a woman never to go astray without the seduction and art of men. Biblical and Canon law places the blame on the woman. The New Testament follows the lines laid down in the Old. Jesus shows no departure from Jewish custom and law with regards to women. He knows them only as servants or attendants, and in their inevitable functions of wife and mother. But there is no glimpse anywhere in the New Testament of woman being a citizen, or an independent member of society. Paul's doctrine is:—

For a man . . . is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man.

Women are "commanded to be under obedience" for man is the head of the woman as Christ is the head of the Church, and she is to remain silent in the Church. She begins existence as an afterthought and continues as a subordinate.

What Mrs. Northcroft speaks of as the old Semitic influence should, then, properly be called Biblical influence and the minor positions that women actually did occupy in some of the early Christian communities were properly described by Hooker as borrowed from the Heathen.

In my *Woman and Christianity*, I have given a separate chapter to tracing the origin of the segrega-

tion of women and the creation of special rules for their contact with men to the primitive superstition concerning her semi-supernatural influence. It was not based upon any conception of her inferiority—that belongs to a later and more sophisticated period, but to a belief in difference. The peculiarity of the Christian influence is that while—along with other things—it revived in full force this primitive superstitious view of woman, Christianity gave it an ethical basis. The savage would have said, as he still says, that promiscuous contact with woman involves certain supernatural penalties here. The Christian, prevented from indulging in this belief in its primitive simplicity, held that the possible and probable penalty which contact with women brought on man was damnation hereafter. Man could not do without her, but intercourse with her, sexual or otherwise, had to be accompanied with due precautions. Thus Paul's only justification for marriage was that it was "better to marry than to burn." That great preacher, St. Chrysostom described woman as "a necessary evil, a desirable calamity, a deadly fascination, a painted ill"; St. Clement said, "Above all, it seems desirable that we turn away from the sight of women." Principal Donaldson rightly describes the influence that early Christianity exerted on the position of women by saying that if we define man as a male human being and woman as a female human being, Christianity took "male" out of the definition of the man, and "human" out of the definition of woman, and so left man as a human being and woman as a female being. Professor Becker in his *Christianity and Islam*, also says that the low view of women in Mohammedan countries is due to the fact that it reached Islam in Christian dress, and with the authority of Christian hostility to marriage. I do not know what were the "broad principles" governing the relations of the sexes to which Mrs. Northcroft refers, but it is evident that if they were on the side of liberality they were either ignored by the early Christians, or they had never heard of them.

* * *

Woman Under Church Rule

The teachings laid down in both the Old and the New Testaments, and the practices of the early Church led to more restrictive rules and regulations as the power of Christianity increased. Not only was a married woman prevented holding property, but the right of equal inheritance between brothers and sisters also went, the Church holding that the male was the "worthiest of blood." This was a distinction which that staunch old Conservative and rationalizer of feudal privileges, Blackstone, admitted was quite unknown to Roman law. Blackstone also laid it down that, according to law, "The very being or legal existence of a woman is suspended during marriage." The whole influence of Canon law was against the equality of the sexes, and its aim appeared to be the complete destruction of every vestige of the freedom and dignity which the Roman law gave to women.

* * *

That Modern Aspect

So long as the power of the Christian Churches remained unimpaired woman was doomed to a position of legal and religious subordination. All the leaders of the established churches were agreed upon this. Luther held that woman's functions were to bear children and attend on man. Calvin followed the same line, Knox thundered against the Monstrous Regiment of Women, and decided that "By the order of nature, by the malediction and curse pronounced against woman, by the mouth of St. Paul, the inter-

preter of God's sentence, woman was shut out of all authority." In America the Puritans carried the same conception into the new world, and in the struggle for the equality of the sexes in America, as in this country, the chief opposition came from Christians. The Methodist view in America as late as 1880 was officially expressed in the following deliverance:—

Woman is under a curse which subjects her to man. . . . The Bible is addressed to man, and not to woman; man comes to God through Jesus, and woman comes to Jesus through man; every privilege the wife enjoys she receives through her husband, for God has declared that woman shall not rule man, but be subject to him.

I said last week that the outcome of the resolution before the Methodist Conference was similar to other resolutions that had been before that gathering during the past forty years. Although writing away from home, I found my dates to be very exact, for it was in 1894 that a resolution to admit women as delegates to the Conference was brought forward. That resolution was rejected. A year later, the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes proposed that women delegates, provided "a district Synod judges that her election will serve the interests of the work of God," be admitted to the Conference. This also was rejected. And now, in 1934, the Conference has rejected the proposal for women to enter the ministry. When they are admitted their admission will doubtless be proclaimed as a triumph of Christian principles!

Other Churches have been equally as Christian in their behaviour. In 1916 there was a National Mission of Health and Repentance established "under the auspices of the Established Church." The women wished to lend a hand. There was no objection to that. But they also wanted to preach, and that was a quite different matter. A compromise was arranged that they should preach to women and girls only—but they were not to preach from the pulpit, the lectern, or the chancel steps. These places were taboo to women—just as a man might touch the body of the risen Jesus but a woman might not. But even to that compromise there were strenuous objections, for a page of the *Times* was covered with the signatures of staunch male and female Christians who objected to women preachers as being unchristian. A further public protest was issued by the clergy of the diocese of London stating:—

We believe that to grant permission to women to preach in our churches is contrary to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures, and contrary to the mind and general practice of the whole Catholic Church. Still more, we believe that such permission will be an encouragement to those women who publicly claim their right to be appointed to the priesthood and episcopacy of the Church, which claim is heretical.

That last sentence is worth noting—"Which claim is heretical." Of course it is. The claim of Mrs. Northcroft, editor of a Christian paper, and fully believing herself to be a Christian, is yet heretical; more than heretical, it is distinctly anti-Christian. For when all is said and done in the way of excusing and apologizing, the damning facts that remain are that it was under Christian rule that the freedom which the Roman law gave to women was completely destroyed, and it was not until the Christian Churches were weakened, until non-Christian belief became a common feature in society that the demand to equality was conceded by many, although still bitterly opposed by the most Christian of the Churches. What, then, are we to make of the "broad principles" laid down by Jesus? What are they? Where were they expressed? When in Christian times were they put into operation? The satire of the whole situation is

that the most powerful of the Christian Churches are still bitterly hostile to the principle of the equality of the sexes. Mrs. Northcroft has to look for her strongest supporters among Freethinkers, and she finds her greatest enemies in the ranks of those who follow the teachings of Christianity.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Grant Allen's Gesture

"A willing slave for years,
I strove to set men free;
Mine were the labours, hopes, and fears,
Be theirs the victory."—*Gerald Massey.*

GRANT ALLEN deserved well of his generation, for his best work was that of a popularizer of science. He fell early under the domination of the master-minds of Darwin and Spencer, and he never tired of bringing their teaching before popular readers. No specialist, Allen had a complete acquaintance with science, and he had a real gift of interpretation. "The Saint Paul of Darwinism," someone dubbed him, and certainly his power of popularizing the master's teaching was remarkable.

Allen was no dry-as-dust student. Before he was twenty-five he knew Canada, England, and the West Indies. He was educated in America, France, in Birmingham, and at Oxford. He also worked in the Indian Statistical Department. All this varied experience of men and affairs was turned to account in his writings. His papers on biology, philology, evolution, and kindred subjects, were readable, even at times amusing. This racy gift of Allen's made him suspect in some learned circles. Serious pedants professed to scorn his scientific journalism. They despised the star-gossip of Richard Proctor on the same grounds, preferring, presumably, the erudite periods of the lamented Dionysius Lardner, whose chaste volumes used to cumber booksellers' fourpenny boxes, alongside such lugubrious reading as Zimmerman *On Solitude*, and Hervey's *Meditations Among the Tombs*. Whether these professors felt that, having gained their knowledge by years of study, it was prodigality to give it away so easily, or whether the old priestly spirit had found a new lodgment in scholastic circles, may be an open question. Nothing appeared to irritate some of these authors of ponderous monographs so much as having their life-work made intelligible to ordinary people. But Allen hoisted the engineers with their own explosives. He opened up a new universe to tens of thousands, with a charm all its own.

Who that came fresh to the study of science could ever say an ungrateful word of the author of *Carving a Coconut*, *The Aesthetic Analysis of an Egyptian Obelisk*, *The Romance of a Wayside Weed*, *The Daisy's Pedigree*, and scores of other delightful and informative articles? He awoke a new interest, and, unconsciously, led the unsuspecting reader through the mazes of science. In enchanting chapters, Grant Allen led a large public to understand the mysteries that, expressed in the esoteric terminology of scientific language, else had remained comparatively unknown.

Grant Allen was so much more than a gifted amateur. He carried a weight of learning gracefully. Though prejudiced against the classics, he produced a translation of Catullus's most famous poem. From the lofty region of classical scholarship it is a sharp curve to turn to Grant Allen the novelist. In the days of threadbare plots, when all the old devices that

were an embroidery to well-spun stories were worn and threadbare, it was a pleasure to find Stevenson and Rider Haggard rivalled in their romances by facts from the laboratory, and problems from the researches of scientists. Towards the end of his career Allen wrote certain "Hill-top" novels, penned purely for humanitarian purposes. *The Woman Who Did* and *The British Barbarians* made a big sensation, but, owing to clerical influence, they caused a drop in the sale of Allen's other novels. The Irish booksellers, as was no doubt to be expected in a priest-ridden country, refused to sell these books, and Allen found, as all pioneers find, that propagating advanced opinions was not "roses all the way."

Theology has always met strange bed-fellows, and one is not surprised to find the versatile Grant Allen among the theologians. He was rightly proud of being one of the first to apply seriously evolutionary theories to the belief in deity. In his preface to his masterpiece, *The Evolution of the Idea of God*, he said:—

It contains, I believe, the first extended effort that has yet been made to trace the genesis of the belief in God from its earliest origin in the mind of primitive man up to its fullest development in advanced and etherealized Christian theology.

It was an honest attempt to explain a big matter, and Allen had his reward. The book made a deep impression, and Herbert Spencer wrote:—

I congratulate you on its achievement. I had no idea you had been devoting such an immensity of labour and research to the subject. The bringing together of the evidence in a coherent form, and showing its bearing on the current creed, can scarcely fail to have a great effect.

The tribute was well deserved. In Allen's masterly work the whole theistic position is discussed in a nutshell. He shows quite clearly that the prevalent Christian idea of deity is but a residuum. The attenuated deity is what is left when the other gods of the Pantheon are broken to pieces and ground to powder; simply the abstract form and general designation. A bubble is blown with real soapsuds, but it grows ever thinner and more and more transparent, and is most beautiful when it is at the point of breaking. The beauty does not save it; it breaks and disappears.

Allen met with great opposition on account of his book. Publishers, who were simply tradesmen, feared to offend vested interests, and would not allow him to give full expression to his ideas. Science, pure and simple, did not pay; and novel-writing, to which he was compelled to turn for a living, had to be carried on within absurd and galling restrictions. Publishers wanted "smooth tales, generally of love." The last kind of work in which he exercised his versatile pen was art-criticism and guide-book writing. His papers on Italian art are as valuable as they are interesting, and in his series of *Historic Cities* he showed us all what a guide-book should be.

His life was not wasted. If professors frowned, and undergraduates sneered, it is something to have helped the people to grasp the teachings of science. Allen called himself a humble disciple of science, but, in popularizing the teaching of evolution, he made an enviable reputation, and what writer desires more? "Can you emit sparks?" said the cat to the ugly duckling in the old nursery tale. Grant Allen could emit sparks, more brilliant, because he knew the book of the world as well as the world of books.

MIMNERMUS.

The Menace of Catholic Action

AFTER the preliminary agitation that had been carried on by the Bishops to prepare their "flocks," the Joint Pastoral Letter of the Hierarchy of England and Wales on Catholic Action was issued in May of this year. This initiated the formation of a National Board of Catholic Action under the presidency of Cardinal Bourne. The declared aim of this body is:—

. . . to unite the Catholics of the country of every political shade of opinion and of every social grade, under the immediate direction of their own Ordinaries, in common action for the common cause of Catholic faith and morals.

Or to use the comment of the *Catholic Universe*:—

. . . the scattered forces of the Catholic Church in England and Wales are now being mobilized into a well organized, efficient—but pacific—army.

This is neither the application of a new policy nor an unexpected event. It was already rumoured in September, 1932, in certain Catholic newspapers, that the Vatican had plans to co-ordinate Catholic Action in England and other countries. It is, however, another step in the systematic advance of Catholicism in this country, the significance of which all who have the cause of intellectual liberty at heart would do well to consider.

The idea of Catholic Action sprang up in the time of Leo XIII., and the principles on which it is based are formulated in his important encyclicals—particularly the so-called "Workers' Charter" (1891) and "On Christian Democracy" (1901). It has been defined "authentically" by the present Pope Pius XI. as "the participation and the collaboration of the laity with the Apostolic Hierarchy" in matters affecting the rights and vital interests of the Mother Church. Pius X., in explaining the reasons for Catholic Social Action in his encyclical on that subject (1905) truly remarks:—

The Church, throughout her long history, has always, and on every occasion, luminously shown that she possesses a wonderful power of adaptation to the varying conditions of civil society; . . . always safeguarding her sacred rights, she easily bends and adapts herself in all that is contingent and accidental, to the vicissitudes of time, and the fresh needs of society.

In the modern age, when in many countries the Catholic Church lacks the political privilege and economic power (through land ownership) that it once possessed, it is dependent on the pressure which can be exerted on political parties or governments—eager for votes or afraid of popular revolt—through the masses it controls. It is only through its laity that the Church can exercise this power; for they can enter various organizations without meeting the same suspicion and distrust which the black robes of the priest are likely to arouse, and above all without committing the Church to the particular set of political or social views and aims which the organizations in question uphold.

It should be well known, at least to Freethinkers, how Catholics have penetrated every Parliamentary Party in this country, successfully removing any open antagonism to Catholicism, and even influencing them to forward Catholic claims, especially in regard to their schools. It is as well to remember in this connexion the words of Cardinal Bourne when he was interpreting the present Pope's encyclical "On the Social Order" for British Catholics:—

Happily we may safely say that there is no political party at the present time in England which definitely takes its stand on non-Christian prin-

ciples. . . . Good, sincere Catholics have been Conservatives, or Liberals, or members of the Labour Party.

The Cardinal did not fail to add, in instructing the Catholic as to his attitude inside the party of his choice:—

When his religious faith and his conscience come into conflict with the claims of the party, he must obey his conscience and withstand the demands which his party may make upon him.

Apart from the Civil Service and the police, the Trade Unions and Co-operative Movement have been the particular prey of this Church; for it knows that if it is to capture the masses, it must direct particular attention towards the organizations of the working-class. The rapid formation of Catholic guilds inside most of the strongest trade unions has been one of the most important aspects of this policy in recent years.

The *Catholic Directory* lists more than fifty Catholic organizations of national import in this country, each appealing to certain special interests, but all furthering the common cause of Catholic advance. Following the example of countries like Italy and Czechoslovakia, the work of these organizations is now to be unified under central control.

The forerunner of the present National Board for Catholic Action has been the Catholic Confederation, of which the Westminster Federation, under the strict control of Cardinal Bourne, has been the most active section, particularly in recent years. In its journal the *Catholic Federationist* (January, 1927), an article appeared on "What the Federation has done," from which the following is taken:—

From 1906 to 1920 it has dealt with every Education Bill, from the Birrell Bill to the Fisher proposals; it has continually opposed Socialism, and stood for the difference between Christian Democracy and Social Democracy; it fought and defeated Secular Education in the Trades Union and Labour Movement, and Divorce in the Co-operative Movement; it has continuously watched Catholic interests in the Press, Parliaments and Municipalities . . .

In the Joint Pastoral Letter, the Hierarchy are at pains to emphasize in connexion with the new National Board that "Catholic Action is above and beyond all politics, whether national or international." For the Holy Father "has laid it down explicitly that abstention from every form of political activity is a fundamental law of this world-wide movement." Then follows this interesting statement:—

The guarantee of its spiritual character and aims is to be found in the Holy Father's statement that "Catholic Action is, and always will be, dependent upon the episcopate."

Now it is undoubtedly true that one of the most important principles of Catholic Action is that the Catholics in acting shall never be more than puppets of the priest. Already, in 1901, Leo XIII. formulated this idea in the following words:—

Finally, we again enjoin, and with greater insistence, that whatever schemes people take up in the popular cause, whether individually or in association, they must be entirely submissive to episcopal authority.

For, said Pius X., in 1905:—

. . . it is proper . . . that Catholics should submit, like docile, loving children, to this maternal vigilance.

But is the Church then incapable of directing political action? When M.P.'s and potential M.P.'s were questioned as to their attitude towards Catholic schools in the 1929 elections, and their answers read out with appropriate comment in the Catholic Churches, when some of them were bombarded with

threatening postcards at the time of the Scurr Amendment, was this "spiritual" and not "political" action because the Church controlled it? If in the interest of plain speaking and clear thinking we put this word-play on one side, the most that can be said about previous Catholic Action in this country is that it has avoided definite alliance with any one political party. For tactical reasons, however, the advocacy of a Catholic political party for England has been negated by the Church. Here is a representative statement of the reasons from the *Christian Democrat* (organ of the Catholic Social Guild):—

Why not a Catholic Party? We remember an objection stated by the Cardinal, that the party, like other parties, would make mistakes, and the Church would be held responsible. There is the further objection that we should set ourselves apart in isolation from our non-Catholic brethren, and so sacrifice those countless and important, if individually insignificant, opportunities of penetration, permeation and leadership which lie upon us as a duty of apostolate and Christian patriotism.

In Czechoslovakia, however, to take the example of but one other country, a distinction is not even preserved between the Catholic Parties and Catholic Action, as the following extract from the constitution of Catholic Action there illustrates:—

Catholic action is non-political . . . ; if however Parliament is occupied with questions which concern the Church or her clergy, Catholic Action also co-opts on to its councils the Parliamentary representatives of such parties as are professedly Catholic, and have included in their programme the settlement of Catholic claims.

If we consider the general aims of the new National Board as they are carefully formulated in the Pastoral Letter, it is clear that certain of them are only attainable through political means:—

Under ecclesiastical control and guidance Catholic Action will be directed to watching the Press and broadcast utterances for misrepresentations with regard to Catholic faith and practice; it will sedulously safeguard the interests of Catholic schools in the face of threatened inimical legislation; it will defend the principles of Catholic morality against the insidious propaganda of the new Paganism; it will strive to secure for Catholics adequate representation on public bodies; it will aim at co-ordinating and intensifying all the means hitherto employed to bring the knowledge of our Holy Faith to the minds of our fellow countrymen both by the spoken and written word!

As in the past, so in the future, only with a greater co-ordination of effort through the new National Board of Catholic Action, the Catholic Laity in each of the political parties will fight for further grants for Non-Provided Schools, will oppose more enlightened facilities for disseminating birth control information, will seek a tightening-up of the Blasphemy Laws and so on.

The study of this, as of any aspect of Catholic Action, brings one inevitably to the conclusion that in matters of organization and tactic this Church, which manages to advance successfully a bad cause based on an out-worn superstition, is an object-lesson to us all in the Freethought Movement. The vigorous activity of many Catholics forms a striking and tragic contrast to the complacency and lethargy of many who lightly pledge their service to the cause of Reason. It is true that we cannot secure unity and action on the basis of an obedience that results from fear. Can we not do so, however, as a consequence of our conviction of the truth and the nobility of our cause? Let us take a concrete example. The average Catholic refuses to send his child to a non-Catholic school, without the consent of his Bishop, because

he fears excommunication. Has the secularist not sufficient reason to withdraw his children from religious instruction at school, in the knowledge that such instruction is detrimental to the free growth of the child's mind, and, therefore is, a violation of its rights? This is really but an elementary form of Secular Action. But how many Freethinkers have fulfilled this duty?

ALLAN FLANDERS.

Fables for Freethinkers

II.—THE MARTIAN AND THE PARSON

A CREATURE once descended from Mars to the Earth, and he was, naturally, taken in charge by a clergyman, who was appointed by the powers that be to act as a guide to the stranger.

First they came to a room where some men were sitting round a table, quietly discussing things, and settling their joint affairs in an orderly manner.

"Why are you hurrying?" said the Martian, for the clergyman was rushing by the room at top speed.

"Oh," said the clergyman, "those men are horrid men, Atheists, unbelievers, Rationalists. They would put their feeble reason above the wisdom of the Most High God." And he crossed himself and muttered a prayer beneath his breath.

And presently they came to a room where men were disputing hotly about something. Words were being bandied about, and the men looked almost like coming to blows.

"Why, what is this?" said the Martian.

"That," said the clergyman, "is the Church congress where the most momentous questions of the day are settled." And he smiled pleasantly on the assembly.

"And what question are they settling now?" said the Martian.

"I think," said the clergyman, "they are discussing whether banns of marriage should be read by the clergy or by churchwardens."

"A most momentous question, without doubt," said the Martian. But the clergyman did not understand sarcasm.

And presently they came to a place where men were killing each other. All over the field of battle lay the dead and wounded, and groans and shrieks filled the air.

"What are these men fighting for?" asked the Martian.

"I don't know," said the clergyman.

"Do they know?" said the Martian.

"I don't expect so," said the clergyman.

"Then why don't the clergy speak against it?" said the Martian, "after all, the founder of your religion was the Prince of Peace—or so you told me."

"Oh, the clergy have to do their bit encouraging the brave men who fight," said the clergyman.

And as the Martian flew back to his planet he shook his head, and said, "You know, I think I prefer the Atheists and the Rationalists after all."

JOHN ROWLAND.

HELL.

The pagan hell of punishment, expounded by Platonism was continued and intensified by Christianity. Plato's hell endured a thousand years only, the hell of the Christians burns for ever and ever. Enoch, in his *Book of Secrets* says, that being taken into the third heaven, he was thence led into the northern region, and shown a horrible place of tortures, darkness, gloom, fire and ice. There was fire on all sides and on all sides ice, and angels terrible and without pity carrying savage weapons. Enoch is told that the place is prepared for those who commit witchcraft on earth and boast of lying, and oppress the poor.

James Mew, "Traditional Aspects of Hell."

The God-Maker

I.

In Ancient days when still the world was new,
 Fresh from the melting-pot of unknown things,
 When from some nebula, obscure and vague,
 This solid universe we know was born:
 In those old days all earthly life began,
 And first some strange amorphous creature walked
 Though humankind had never yet been seen.
 Through queer, uncharted beings, monstrous, foul,
 Strange, apelike forms too bestial to be thought,
 Through unimagined figures man evolved,
 Until, when countless centuries had rolled away
 The first man walked and talked and thought of life.
 His thoughts were not obscure monstrosities,
 As pass for thought to-day. He thought of *things*,
 He thought "my axe," "my arrow," or "my wife."
 He was not troubled by the tortuous doubts
 That trouble modern men and fill their minds,
 With portents of disaster and of doom.
 But slowly to his mind there came a fear.
 Why did the wind blow strangely soft one day?
 And why, another, did the hurricane
 Tear down the giant trees above the hill?
 Why was it, when he slept, he saw the forms
 Of those who from the world had passed away?
 Why did he, periodically, sleep?
 And where was he when all his body slept,
 But he did not? Such idle questionings
 Might we imagine that first man to make.
 From these first vague and curious doubts,
 He made a ghost and from the ghost a god,
 Who ruled his tribe and held him in a thrall.
 The god of tribal might would help him on,
 And to this god, strange named and strangely made
 He would appeal in times of peace and war.
 The arts of peace would make the god's abode,
 The arts of war, god's sport; god's hiding-place
 Would be in country lonely and taboo,
 And to his god would man make sacrifice.
 The best of fruits, the best of beasts and man
 To God alone were given, for God made
 All his happiness, all joy, all right to live.

II.

Then there arose that band of clever men,
 The priests, the men who claimed alone to know
 God's tenets, God's desires and holy whims,
 And through whom only man could please his god.
 When man had made a god, he made a priest,
 And priest made god more strong: so went they on,
 And in one long succession they conspired.
 This went in such a wise for countless years,
 So new gods still arose as old ones died,
 Until at last the gods were numberless,
 And man must worship at so many shrines,
 That it were difficult to hold aloof
 From such conspiracies of priestly craft.
 Men ate their gods to take on holy strength
 And drank Gods' blood to gather mighty power,
 And when at last the priests saw men grow cold,
 And disregarding, they produced new schemes:
 They promised that if men believed in God
 And worshipped with all strength they could command,
 Then men should be with God in years to come,
 Finding a dwelling-place in regions new,
 Living for ever in sweet ecstasy.
 This new device of priestly cleverness
 Drew more to priestly coffers day by day,
 And so for centuries the men still came
 To musty, darkened caves and buildings drear
 And worshipped at the shrines of futile gods,
 All sanctified and turned to priestly ends.
 The gods we met to-day are still the same,
 They are but like (though vaguer) gods of yore:
 Jehovah, Baal and Ashtoreth are one
 With versions of the ghost of ancient times,
 Made in the image of the man of old.

If man pretends that God of this our time,
 Is different from million years ago,
 It is but self-deception, wilful sin,
 Which cannot be supported or upheld.

III.

This is a sorry picture to present,
 But, happily, another can be seen.
 The gods are dying; man is slow, but sure,
 And soon the gods are dead; the poor belief
 In some provincial heaven in the sky
 Will fade to nothingness and disappear.
 Then, in that happy day when gods are gone,
 When no more foolish myths the human race
 Will take as evidence of holy truth,
 Man will at last be free. The bonds of God
 Which from primeval times have bound men's minds
 Will be destroyed. Oh, may that happy day
 Be near on us, when from poor foolish cries
 Of "Oh, God hear us," we may be relieved,
 And turn from this mad hope of future bliss
 To some attempt to make all life on earth
 More possible and nearer our desire.

HERBERT SHELLEY.

Acid Drops

We are not unduly impressed by the American puritanical demand for "cleaning-up Hollywood." Movie magnates are said to be scared to death by these religious threats which courage and even ordinary discretion would ignore. The attempt to censor films is simply another Church claim to dictate impertinently to the people. A Jesuit priest, the Rev. Daniel Lord, drafted the "ethical protest," which the wolfish sheep called the Federal Council of Churches dumbly support. We often wish for better films. Their chief vice is their slavish standardizing down to the level of the lowest intelligence. Education of the people, not censorship of the films, is the remedy. The Churches may frighten a few church members out of attending cinemas, but picture-patrons seldom attend prayer-meetings. The Film "bosses" risk losing their own public who do not want pious pictures (which the parsons will never persuade their own patrons to visit).

The *Modern Churchman* gives a valuable summary of the history of "Church Reform" propositions. A good sample is the case of Dr. Arnold (of Rugby). Believing the Church to be "in imminent danger," he "envisaged a drastic re-organization of the church." A year later his precious plan is shelved for ever. "My pamphlet," Arnold frankly confessed, "was written on the supposition that the Church was in extreme danger, and therefore I proposed remedies . . . which would be manifestly chimerical had not the danger and alarm as I supposed been imminent."

A translation of Von Papen's Suppressed Speech is given in the August issue of Vernon Bartlett's *World*. Von Papen denounces Communism on religious grounds. "Real religion is an alliance with God," he says, "and not with substitutes by Karl Marx through his Materialist conception of history." Von Papen makes clear that in the Nazi state "We must be happy in having our foundation in Christianity." He adds that the coming struggle is "to decide whether the German Empire shall be Christian or shall lose itself."

The *Times of Malta* appeals for jingoism—plus religion. "The maintenance of Religion" is one of the first pleas in its murder manifesto. It reminds us that "The English are still an exceptionally religious nation and read Holy Scripture," and it therefore quotes Lord Rothermere's favourite text from St. Luke about "the strong man armed." And as Malta is commercially interested in shipbuilding and armament manufacture,

this local newspaper adds that "it will be a good day for Malta" when the orders for new murder-machines arrive.

The Oxford University Press publish a romance called *The Call of Israel*, by W. J. P. Adams. The author proves that Israel was really God's Chosen People, "called" by God, the "Call" being chiefly "attested" by Miracles. These include "Earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and other seismic phenomena." All this sounds terribly like the miracles of Moses in Egypt, when the native idolators imitated the Great Prophet of Jehovah—up to a point. When Moses produced his famous Plague of Lice, the Egyptians gave it up, saying, "This is the finger of God."

Dr. Adolph Keller's book, *Religion and the European Mind*, has discovered that the world chaos is due to—what do you think? "The Secularizing of Ethics!" "The standards set up by the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount are openly flouted." What a pity that Torquemada's pious efforts to keep us in the right way were defeated. The ethics of religious Armies have not always been "flouted." The "Dark Ages" is the name History gives to the triumph of Unsecular Ethics.

An American pastor, just to show how truthful the Bible is, allowed a cobra to bite him twice. "God," he solemnly assured his devout congregation, "would look after him," and he quoted Luke x. 19, in proof that no harm would come to him. We should have felt that there was something in his contention had he swallowed half a pound of arsenic, or drank half a gallon of strong nitric acid—as indicated in Mark. But somehow or other, up to date we find Christians shirk these tests like the very devil, and even Christian Scientists, who do not believe in the existence of evil, refuse to "tempt" the Lord. The pastor, referred to above, is getting on quite well, which shows that the cobra had, in all probability, been rendered harmless first. Or is it all the usual American hoax from Fundamentalists to boost up religion?

Mr. Hilaire Belloc's latest "putting 'em right," is about James II. England certainly has had some unmitigated cads as Kings, but James II. would take a lot of beating in the long list. Mr. Belloc laboriously tries to show James was the acme of tolerance as if tolerance was one of the undisputed virtues of this Roman Catholic King, "whose whole effort was at leaving the conscience of all his subjects free, including not only Catholics but Quakers and every form of Nonconformity." We do not intend to examine this assertion here, but the King who could allow a beast like Jeffreys to work his savage fury on the poor peasants in the Monmouth rebellion without a spark of pity, was rightly kicked out of the country. It is interesting to note that Mr. Belloc does not mention this event. Is the account of the infamous Assizes also a libel on James?

The Bishop of Erie, Mgr. Gannon, is trying to buy the house where "Our Lord attended the Last Supper before His Crucifixion on Good Friday." At present it is actually occupied by a Mahomedan family very much opposed to Christianity, who may (for all we know) be using the Holy Spot as a kitchen, peeling potatoes, brushing boots, etc., in it, so the Bishop must be horrified at such desecration. It need hardly be said that the evidence that the house was ever used by Jesus for the Last Supper is exactly nil, but the Faithful and the Converts must be given something to pray for and to pay for, as the case may be, to keep the ball rolling. But what a game it all is!

The Bishop of London, in allowing the marriage of a divorced person at St. Martin-in-the-Fields, has had the full fire of intolerance played upon him from his brethren-in-Christ, in spite of his *apologia* that it is the first time in thirty years, and will probably be the last.

He claims to have refused hundreds of applications, but how he will get over the indignation of various members of the Mothers' Union, of Churchmen and Churchwomen, the wives and mothers, "who uphold and fight for the Law of God in the world He has made," the scorn poured upon him by Anglo-Catholics and their journals—in fact, by all the good and kind and noble Christians who follow his lead, is more than we can surmise. The fact remains, however, that divorced people are not allowed to be married in "real" Christian Churches, and the Bishop has allowed it. We wonder whether sordid wealth has had the effect of making him break Church Law, or the "high" position held by the people concerned in society? These things *have* been known to change the unalterable laws of God in the past, don't you know.

The Rev. H. C. Studdy is heartily in agreement with the scathing criticism recently applied by a Church journal to the B.B.C. religious services. "Why," he asks pathetically, "do certain clerics afflict us with this horror? Is there any reverence in affecting a sad, gloomy and depressing voice? To hear some priests pronounce the Absolution one might think it a terribly tragic malediction. I have literally squirmed to hear them exhort our dearly beloved brethren." Now this is all very well. We are delighted to find a vicar in such thorough agreement with us, but what is he, and those who think like him, doing about it? Have they let Sir John Reith know their opinion of the "horror?" Have they united in protesting against the "horror" being forced on to listeners whether *they* like it or not? Has not the time come for a determined stand to be made by all classes of listeners against religious services to be broadcasted at all, on, what is, after all, a national institution, paid for by all classes of people?

A visitor to Pitcairn Island reports interviewing the present Chief, called Mr. Christian (for obvious reasons not using the original name). The interviewer says the family "still stand for the Faith of their Fathers," which sounds fine. But the interviewer is unkind enough to add that they are the "direct descendants of the religious mutineer"; all the Islanders, of course, having as ancestors the Mutineers of the "Bounty." We hope they are not living up to so queer a "Faith."

Of all the friends of Peace, commend us to Mr. Wickham Steed, who so often writes in the congenial pages of the *Christian World*. Writing on "The Outlook for Europe," he joins hands appropriately enough with Mr. Winston Churchill. Mr. Steed is in favour of England working with, or perhaps we should say THROUGH the League of Nations. If the *Christian World* were a responsible journal, or Mr. Steed a Cabinet Minister, there would be a danger that his war-like attitude would land this country in immediate war. What he wants is an alliance of "Christian" nations against Russia and other countries which he names as "so many infusions of gangsterdom." Of course AFTER that, we might have what he calls "peace," but, says he "Then—but not till then," "the world may be safe for peace and Christian civilization."

The City Temple is to have a treat! Professor Rufus Jones, on his way to Germany to engage there in research work on the "Friends of God," will preach where once Joseph Parker asked God to "Damn the Sultan." As however the Professor is a Quaker he will not be allowed to conduct the Communion Service for which the City Temple will provide another minister.

The *Christian World* repeats a rather good story about the custom in the House of Commons which requires a Chaplain to offer prayer to what we might call "The Great Absentee Member." "The Chaplain comes in, looks around on the assembled members, and then fervently exclaims: 'Oh God! Let us pray for our country!'"

Most believers in prayer find, sooner or later, that there is a limit to its success. Long ago it was discovered that prayer for rain was useless if the wind was in the wrong quarter. Now the Rev. John Bevan admits that "If I am born colour-blind, no God can make an artist of me. If I am born without an 'ear' for music, no God can give what the musicians call 'pitch.'" How long will it take Christians to learn that ALL prayer is a delusion?

A popular young minister of Leeds, the Rev. Leslie Weatherhead, writes in the *British Weekly*, about the "Oxford Groups." He thinks that the Groups' insistence on the guidance of God can be overdone. "Many believe it superstitiously with more fanaticism than intelligence." He voices the opinion "that it may be a delusion to suppose that the Infinite Being condescends to guide the details of individual life." Mr. Weatherhead does not frankly oppose these silly ideas as fantastic superstition, but he goes so far as to say: "Though it hurts some groupers to say so, guidance comes often by using one's commonsense, which is so uncommon and so seldom seen." If Mr. Weatherhead thinks this out, he will in time see the futility of all ideas of Divine Intervention in human affairs.

People get so used to ancient and discarded methods that they imagine the world is coming to an end unless these are restored. Mildred Cable, a Missionary who has lived in China for many years, expressed her amazement that those dear old pious "Tracts" we knew so well in our childhood are now in limbo. Innocent lady, she says, "I do not know what we should do without them in China. There the people read them with avidity." No doubt the language is as "simple" as the ideas. Chinamen may learn English that way. They are also of a convenient size for wrapping small quantities of merchandise.

"Thy Kingdom Come," was the text of a sermon by the Rev. James Reid, D.D. Incidentally he told us what "God's Kingdom" will bring to mankind. Universal brotherhood, no more wars and no more slums: these are only a few of the positive advantages coming by this unlikely route. Dr. Reid, like most Christians, believes "there is no other way." If that melancholy fact is true, what is the use of "merely human" reforms or revolutions? And what sense is there in Socialists and others pretending that Religion and social salvation can run together. Religionists have a substitute for, not an aid to, secular welfare movements.

Dr. Norwood, whose determination we recorded recently to be kicked out rather than resign his present job, must be a bigger man than we imagined. The Primate of New Zealand describes him as "a modern prophet who is too big for any denomination, and is being claimed by the whole church." We suggest the whole church should purchase his services and do without its present army of ministers. Dr. Norwood reminds us of the Cinema film, called "So Big."

"La Semaine Religieuse," writes that "all the churches have much to learn in the domain of charity." Yes, but think what a lot they have to learn in every other department.

There has been some surprise expressed because a hitch has arisen over an appointment offered the Rev. Alex Smart by the Church of Scotland. Can it be that mere filthy lucre has anything to do with it? Mr. Alex Smart is a minister at Broughty Ferry, and was at one time not so long ago, called "Ferry Smart Alec." We wonder why?

There is a vacancy for a bishop. The See (and income thereof) of St. Asaph will be filled as soon as the will of God is known. The will of God will be made public the moment the Electoral Body of the Welsh Church has

decided who is to be the lucky successor of the Apostles. It would be most awkward if at any time God's nominee happened to have a different name from that chosen by the earthly crowd, but (by a well-known Divine Miracle) this has never once occurred. God may be King of Kings and Lord of Lords, but, in the selection of His Bishops, he is the most constitutional monarch imaginable.

The "paganization" of Christianity in Germany is proceeding apace, and Germans are at last beginning to find out that many of the divine "Christian" heroes are really Jews. "A child in a girl's school," reports a correspondent from Germany, "said something about St. Paul. 'Paul!' said an elder pupil, 'We don't want to hear anything about Paul. He was a Jew!'" And as for Jesus, one German teacher, not wanting to give up the Gospel entirely, has discovered he was not altogether a Jew. The father of Jesus was a Jew, but his mother was not a Jewess! Thus is Christianity being taught in Germany.

We learn that 180 Japanese warships and 200 aircraft will take place in "grand naval manoeuvres," commencing in August, and lasting until the end of October. Japan has bettered her instruction from the West, and we earnestly hope that the natives will have jaws left to enable them to masticate the fruits of victory when they arrive.

Item of news in the twentieth century. A special committee of Methodists has drawn up a report on infant baptism.

A correspondent in the *Times* gives the following information to the public who walk, and also to the public who go very fast in motor-cars as their business is more important than that of the slower moving herd of pedestrians. She writes:—

Because I am a very fallible human being I remind myself to offer this prayer, and to recall its intention while I am on the road, by having a small medal of St. Christopher carrying the Christ-Child attached by a ribbon to the key with which I switch on my engine. I now propose to widen the scope of my prayer by offering it every time I go out for not myself only, but for other users of the road as well.

Inquirers for evidence of the chronology of this statement must be reminded that it is in the year 1934.

Fifty Years Ago

CONSECRATING THE COLOURS

CONSECRATING the colours shows the intimate relation between religion and war. Both belong to the age of faith. When the age of reason has fairly dawned both will be despised and finally forgotten. They are always and everywhere founded on ignorance and stupidity, although they are decorated with all sorts of fine names. The man of sense sees through all these fine disguises. He knows that the most ignorant people are the most credulous, and that the most stupid are the most pugnacious. Educated and thoughtful men shrink alike from the dogmas of religion and the brutalities of war.

Further, this consecration of the colours reminds us that the Christian deity is still the lord of hosts, the god of battles. His eyes delight to look over a purple sea of blood, and his devotees never invoke his name so much as when they are about to emulate his sanguinary characteristics. The Dean of Windsor does not shock, when he blesses the flag which is to float over scenes of carnage and flame like a fiend's tongue over the hell of battle, where brothers of the same human family, without a quarrel in the world, but set at variance by thieves and tricksters, maim and mangle and kill each other with fratricidal hands which ought to have been clasped in friendship and brotherhood.

The "Freethinker," August 24, 1884.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL:

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412

TO CORRESPONDENTS

P. GOLDMAN.—Thanks for quotations. You will find an explanation of the scientific significance of both "mind" and "matter" in *Materialism Restated*. We cannot give it in a sentence. The root fallacy lies in looking for either mind or matter as things in themselves.

T. BENSON.—Mr. Cohen will be visiting Liverpool in October. Please introduce yourself to him.

G. M. DOW.—We should be very pleased to see a Branch of the N.S.S. in Edinburgh. It is possible that Mr. Cohen may lecture there during the autumn. Meanwhile, why not get together the names of those who would help in forming a Branch of the Society?

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

The offices of the National Secular Society and the Secular Society Limited, are now at 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Telephone: Central 1367.

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.

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums

Bradlaugh Sunday falls this year on September 23, and the Bradlaugh Centenary Committee is arranging for a gathering of Freethinkers at Bradlaugh's grave, Brookwood. Arrangements are in hand for two separate parties to meet at Brookwood. Those who like a country walk of eight miles can leave Waterloo Station at 9.55 for Byfleet. They will be met at Waterloo by Mr. A. Bonner and Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner, who will conduct the party to the scene of the gathering. A sandwich lunch will be provided, and the party expects to reach Brookwood about 3.30. For those who do not care for the walk, a train leaves Waterloo at 2.25, reaching the Necropolis at 3.33. The return fare will be 3s. 9d.

The programme at the grave will be a short address by Mr. Cohen on "Freedom," followed by a speech from Mr. Gilmour, and probably others. Tea will be provided for the party at 5 o'clock, at a cost of 1s. 6d. The return train leaves at 6.7, reaching Waterloo at 7.0. It is necessary that those who wish to join the party at tea to acquaint the Secretary, not later than September 20, but the earlier the better. There ought to be a good gathering of Freethinkers, and others, and the whole should form a pleasant day's outing in congenial company.

The Common Sense of Nudism, by G. R. Scott (Werner Laurie, 6s.) provides a fund of common-sense about a subject on which it is quite easy to liberate a consider-

able quantity of nonsense. Apart from the historical sketch embodied in the work, Mr. Scott discusses the whole question on the general health of air and sunlight, reaching the common-sense conclusion that continuous nudity instead of being an aid to health is likely to work in the opposite direction. Sun-bathing for a couple of hours daily is one thing, but to indulge in sun-bathing to the point of marked pigmentation is to render it ineffective, if not decidedly dangerous. Mr. Scott's comments on the whole question of nudity are sane, and leads neither to a revolt against clothing—for which much is to be said on grounds of both health and art—nor to a denunciation of the practice of nudity. We recommend the book to anyone who wishes to read a really balanced discussion of the subject. Several plates accompany the book, without greatly illustrating the subject.

On Sunday next (September 2) the West Ham Branch N.S.S. have arranged an outing to Hainault Forest, and an invitation to join the party is extended to all Freethinkers and friends within access. A train will leave Forest Gate Station at 9.45 a.m. to Grange Hill, return fare 9d. Each member will carry lunch, but tea will be provided for the party at Forest View Tea Rooms, Lambourne End at 4 o'clock. Any further information can be obtained from Mr. F. G. Warner, 83a Dawlish Road, Leyton, London, E.10.

Mr. G. Whitehead will be in Liverpool for the week beginning to-day (Sunday), and as usual the local N.S.S. Branch will co-operate at all meetings. The Liverpool Branch is a well organized unit, and good meetings are sure to result. Membership forms and the necessary information and help towards joining the Branch will be available from any of the officials present.

We have stood long enough the sublime hypocrisy of a gang of hooligan clergy, who claim to-day to be in favour of some sort of peace in the world. Their unctuous silence about the attitude of the clergy in 1914-1918 is meant to conceal one of the ghastliest incidents in all Christian history. Mr. Bedborough has taken the trouble to recall a few hundred typical references by all kinds of Ministers of the Prince of Peace, at a time when sanity and commonsense would have saved the world from millions of useless murders and other crimes. This book will be published by the Pioneer Press some time in the Autumn. It will be called, *War and the Clergyman*.

Dean Inge is always entertaining and always at his best when off his professional subject. At St. Paul's, the Dean made the following statement, true in sentiment, and an echo of Seneca and Bacon, which rather makes all Christian effort appear superfluous:—

We ought, I am sure, neither to fear death nor to wish for it. We ought to feel that death simply does not count.

When we remember that the subject is the chief stock-in-trade of Christianity, we applaud the Dean for not being out of his depth.

Headed "The B.B.C.'s Sad Task," we give the following cutting from a newspaper:—

Sir John Reith, the B.B.C. chief, speaking at an Aldwych Club luncheon recently, said: "There is a decadence, inferiority and mediocrity rampant all over the land—a whole train of misfits in every line of activity."

In considering the B.B.C.'s attitude towards thought worthy of the name, it is safe to say that the B.B.C. found them so, and took care to keep them in that condition. The pronouncement is a confession of failure, and unless Sir John wishes to be accused of diabolism he must postulate a remedy. Perhaps Gorki, who could say more in a sentence than the whole B.B.C. programme will help him out. "Teach them or bear with them," the Russian writer states. Sir John does neither.

The "Oxford" Group Movement

"To-day, owing to a host of causes of which the chief are the assaults of the physical sciences and the psychological effects of the war, for enormous quantities of people, the gods have abdicated and left the heavenly places untenanted. The gap they have left is desperately serious, for the functions they were imagined to perform were essential to human happiness." (R. B. Lloyd: *The Religious Crisis*. p. 32.)

THOSE who can remember the Revivalist movements of thirty and fifty years ago, will remark the difference between the enthusiastic reception accorded to those Revivals by the newspaper press, and its absence from the so-called Oxford Group Movement. At the best it is "damned with faint praise"; at the worst it is roundly condemned, and by far the largest and most drastic criticism comes from the University of Oxford, whose name the Groupers have so impudently taken in vain, and continue to use in spite of all protest, although Dr. Buchman, the founder, is an American, and had no connexion whatever with the University, and the movement itself was not even started at Oxford. As the Rev. Dr. Spencer—the editor of a volume of Essays, mostly by clergymen, on the Group Movement—observes, in the Preface to the volume, *The Oxford Group* "is an unfortunate designation, since the Movement neither originated in Oxford, nor commands an exceptional number of adherents there, and to many, for rather obvious reasons, gratuitously irritating." (*The Meaning of the Groups*. Methuen, 1934. p. v.)

As to the number of Groupers in the university, in a previous article we stated that the number of converts had been placed at three hundred out of the five thousand undergraduates. This estimate is too high; Father R. A. Knox, in his essay in the above-mentioned book, tells us:—

I put the question once to a college chaplain (who, though he is not of that camp, is commonly well informed about the spiritual affairs of the university), how many he thought they numbered. His answer was that he did not think there were, or ever had been at one time, as many as two hundred fully-professed Buchmanites (so to speak) in the place. (p. 85.)

And very few are to be found in the centres of high academic attainment, like Balliol, or Corpus. Says Father Knox: "if you go to Trinity or Magdalen you will hear little or nothing of it. Its strength seems rather to lie in the smaller colleges." (p. 86.) This estimate of the number of converts at Oxford is confirmed, independently, by Miss Marjorie Harrison in her drastic criticism of the Group movement, entitled *Saints Run Mad* (p. 21.)¹ She says: "In the whole University there are only about two hundred members. In the interests of absolute honesty I shall, in future, refer to the organization by its truer title of *Buchman Group Movement* or *Buchmanism*." Miss Harrison further declares that: "the University as a whole violently resent the use of the name 'Oxford' in connexion with this new movement . . . any credit or blame—if it is to be associated with a place—should be given to America, where the movement originated." (p. 24.)

Mr. Philip Stockil, who has been an undergraduate at Oxford since 1930, tells us that every Sunday evening, about eight o'clock, he had noticed a group of undergraduates streaming across the quadrangle of his college. Upon inquiry he was told: "they are Buchmanites, and they are going to a meeting in —'s room to confess their sins." Emulating the Irishman who, coming suddenly upon several people fighting in the street, inquired whether it was a

private affair, or 'if anyone could join in,' he was told that they would be only too pleased to see him, but he was advised to read first *For Sinners Only* in which the aims and objects of the Movement are set forth. "It told me," continues Mr. Stockil:—

first about their system of "Guidance"; how they sit, pencil and paper in hand, and listen patiently for the commands of Providence. Apparently we are to understand that the Deity is permanently situated at the end of a long-distance telephone for the sole purpose of dictating commands as to the moral conduct of any subscriber to this childish faith, who has not the courage to make decisions for himself.

Mr. Stockil afterwards attended a meeting, of which he records: "Now if *For Sinners Only* was to be believed, this meeting would be thronged with bright, clean, well-groomed young men. It was, therefore, with considerable surprise that I entered a room crammed with the most spotty and glum persons that I have ever set eyes on. . . . Certainly some wore smug smiles on their faces, as if they were saying encouragingly to themselves: 'We're all right. We've had guidance. We're saved!'"² A few chattered vivaciously, but "their laughter and talk was of the Hearty—Muscular—Christian variety." Mr. Stockil concludes:—

It would seem that the people who are attracted to these meetings are neither the athletes nor the "intelligentsia" of the University, but rather those poor lost souls who fit into no set, and who look forward to these meetings as a chance of mixing with their fellows and, perhaps, occupying the hearthrug for a glorious ten minutes. For there, for once, they will be able to talk without interruption and address a larger audience than they have ever known before. (pp. 242-243.)

Mr. Stockil gives some very amusing descriptions of the proceedings at these meetings, and concludes: "Buchmanism and its adherents are essentially ridiculous, and as such are worthy to be held up to ridicule. Certainly in Oxford we laugh at them, and uproarious anecdotes concerning their behaviour are perpetually being bandied about." (p. 249.) Their mentality is quite childish; Miss Harrison says of them: "The Group laughs uproariously at every 'joke.' They are not difficult to please in that way. They are the audience that the slapstick comedian dreams about."³

Miss Harrison herself attended thirteen meetings of the Group, so she is not criticizing as from the outside; moreover, she is not a sceptic, but an earnest Christian; and it is because she believes it is doing harm to religion that she attacks it. The more so because, as the Bishop of Durham, who contributes a "Foreword" to her book, observes: "It is noteworthy that, with few exceptions, the Buchmanite converts are drawn from those who already belong to Christian denominations. The Movement does not extend appreciably the area within which Christianity prevails." It is the Revival Story over again, of converting the converted. It certainly makes no converts from our ranks. Miss Harrison says that the revivalist methods of the Group are midway between those of: "Sankey and Moody, Torrey and Alexander, Billy Sunday, Gypsy Smith and Evan Roberts; and those emanating from the Four Square Temple in Los Angeles, under the control of Mrs. Aimée Semple Macpherson." (p. 35.)

The Group is much occupied with Sex. "For some unexplained reason," says Mr. Stockil: "the Buchmanites consider sex as something to be fought

¹ John Lane, 1934, 3s. 6d.

² *Red Rags* (Oxford Essays) Edited by R. C. Carr. p. 242.

³ *Saints Run Mad*. p. 132.

against, as if it were an unnatural instinct. They try, therefore, to put it in chains, as one would a dangerous animal, lunatic or a mad dog, by applying to it the process of sublimation." ⁴ That is, by diverting it to the use of religion. Christianity has through the whole extent of its history waged war against the sexual instinct, with terrible consequences, as history attests. It deeply injured civilization. Instead of suppressing it, the effect was to increase it and inflame it a thousand-fold. Miss Harrison says: "The Group makes the terrible mistake of attempting to turn the sex instinct into an emotional love for the personal Christ." No wonder that Mr. Reginald Lennard, Fellow and Tutor of Wadham College, Oxford; a Tutor of twenty-two years standing, declares: "of all the influences and movements and fashions and opinions which I have seen at work in Oxford during that time, almost, if not quite the most depraving in its ultimate tendency, and the most insidiously inimical to the formation of fine character, is the Group Movement which Dr. Buchman has brought us from America." ⁵ Miss Harrison in quoting this observes:—

Mr. Lennard sums up a great body of thinking opinion. The charge is the most serious that can possibly be made against any movement, religious or otherwise. If it is unanswered, Buchmanism must stand condemned as an insidious power of evil, using as its tools the hearts and minds and lives of men and women sincerely desirous for good. To turn good into evil—will that be the ultimate end of the Buchman Group Movement? ⁶

W. MANN.

⁴ *Red Rags*, p. 247.

⁵ *The Nineteenth Century*, November, 1933.

⁶ *Saints Run Mad*. pp. 150-151.

The Modernist Muddle

The first reaction of many rationalist minds to the curious freakishness of Modernism is a sceptical sneer at its insincerity. But, as the Americans say, "this will get you no place."

The beginning of inquiry necessitates taking sincerity for granted. One does not discuss principles with those whose good faith we impugn. The *tu quoque* is an obvious retort to accusations of hypocrisy.

There is no limit to religious extravagances of superstition in every direction, and in evident genuineness, even if it is only genuine self-deception. The Modernist can at any rate be congratulated on his protest against a great many of these extravagances. Of the brilliance and learning of some Modernists also there can be no manner of doubt.

Yet somehow it will always seem specially pitiable to find learning limping, and logic limiting itself. It is as if a high-speed motor-car ambled along behind a crippled mule, or as if a great mathematician boggled at a simple sum in addition.

The Modernist arrives at the brink of emancipation from old superstitions, but declines to take the plunge into reason's clear pool. It is not that he halts between two opinions. He has arrived at a definite decision—to remain in the camp of the superstitionists.

Without the aid of Freethought and lacking the inspiration of persecuted heretics, Modernism could never have been born. Its clever professors, learned doctors, renowned dignitaries of wealthy churches must inevitably have been "burnt out" of their church, or have succumbed to its dogmas in plain unmistakable orthodox language.

Conceivably, the Modernists are doing useful work—to orthodox believers inside the church. Unconsciously they may be undermining its credal structure and making it easier for "reverend scepticism" to discard certain items of comatose creeds.

A century ago this work would of course have been genuinely serviceable to human progress—but, unfortunately it would have also been impossible. Science and Freethought (if the two can be separated) have destroyed the entire basis of the old beliefs. That is the really important truth which needs broadcasting to-day. The whole tendency of Modernism is (intentionally or otherwise) to divert the public mind from this vital fact.

History, ancient and recent, bears witness to the truth that an institution can survive the complete disappearance of its intellectual, moral and factual basis. Those who occupy the archaic institution remain sometimes quite placidly indifferent to truth, justice or experience. A sentry continues, sometimes, to be paid to guard a king who died centuries ago. It is even possible to erect with every scientific device included, modern buildings dedicated to beings who never lived at all.

The Modernist, for all his learning, attacks those most obviously ridiculous superstitions which rationalists of a pre-scientific age found easiest to fight. But they lack the pioneer Freethinkers' motive and logic. We decline to belittle our fore-runners—many of whom were as learned as any ecclesiastic of their day. It is to these scholars and thinkers that Freethought has always owed its greatest impulses towards reason. But scholarly sceptic and "village Atheist" alike attacked detailed dogmas only in order to overthrow the whole burden of the creeds, of which these specific doctrines were a part.

The danger to-day is that Modernist "emancipation" may strengthen the fortress of superstition. The Modernist position essentially is an attempt to bolster up all the main dogmas of religion by allowing those who subscribe to them a certain latitude in their interpretation of anything they cannot swallow in its full literalness.

The Modernists do not wish even the most stupid superstitions to be suppressed in church or creed. Dr. David, the Bishop of Liverpool, would admit "all our differences as they stand." There is one section of Modernists who would like to see a number of contradictory creeds, at any rate differing creeds, all equally valid and, in fact, alternately recited in the same churches.

The Editor of the *Modern Churchman* would "simplify" the existing creed, mainly by omissions presumably. It is interesting to study the kind of "simplifications" other typical Modernists would make.

Miss Dorothy Emmett, M.A., Lecturer in Philosophy, and a member of the Modern Churchmen's Union, was asked by Dr. Major to give her point of view. Her "Profession of Faith," she thinks, "we can use prayerfully and triumphantly." Briefly summarized, it includes a belief

that God is Spirit; that Jesus is the Son of God; that God has given to us eternal life; that we are the children of God; that if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us; and that he that doeth the Will of God abideth for ever.

Our accusation that this embodies all that Christian orthodoxy ever stood for would probably be answered by an admission that this is exactly what Modernism really seeks to express in more acceptable terms to Christians of to-day.

The Rev. P. Gardner-Smith, perhaps the most brilliant of contemporary Modernist divines, would probably accept Miss Emmett's affirmations while

far more insistent on repudiating interpretations whose phraseology grates on his cultured ears. His recent Sermon before the University of Cambridge on the doctrine of the Ascension, must have surprised that august assembly by its frankness.

In days gone by, Mr. Gardner-Smith's sermon would have been called blasphemous and ribald, because he uses plain language to express his objection to the common interpretation of the doctrine of the Ascension. He describes the deliberate falsification of the old Gospel stories, not mincing his words as he explains the motives of the ancient falsifiers.

Mr. Gardner-Smith mercilessly dissects the legends of the bodily appearances (to the disciples and others) of the Risen Lord who was "even capable of assimilating food" (which is the preacher's satiric allusion to the "broiled fish" yarn). He concludes that the whole conception of a physical ascension "is closely associated with a conception of the Universe in three storeys, and we who hold no such notion find it strange and fantastic."

He pokes fun alike at the story, and at its credulous believers—to our vast entertainment.

But—here's the rub—the same critic, so well-informed, so satiric of silly superstition, himself believes in some sort of Christ's Ascension, while he jests sanely enough at what really is "the childish notion of a process of physical levitation." He quotes, and uses for a text, Bible words which surely imply a belief in the *principle* of the Ascension. He certainly believes in the Resurrection (in "the deeper sense") and a whole lot of other superstitions such as primitive man accepted in at least as "deep" a sense as the Modernist clergyman.

We must take Mr. Gardner-Smith's own statement of the Modernist aim. It is "to extend, not to limit Christ's kingdom; to enlist in His service all who revere and obey His Word, whatever their convictions concerning history and physics." He wants us all "to adore the triumphant Christ."

Modernism is evidently just a new Entrance to, and not an Exit from, the old Temple of Superstition.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

Gospel Side Lines

WHILE Freethinkers justly call attention to the vast wealth of the big churches and the princely incomes drawn by ruling ecclesiastics, it must not be forgotten that quite a number of other minor parasites and "batteners on honest men's corned-beef barrels" derive a comfortable livelihood from proclaiming the faith in Jesus, as laid down by the leaders of their respective communions. Many laymen with the gift of the gab—and the gift of little else—periodically act as class leaders and lay preachers. Many pious and plausible rogues also show considerable ingenuity in organizing various kinds of "Missions" with catch-penny appeals to the public, based on the claims that their "Missions," while designed to meet the secular needs of poorer people, have always as their main aim the "spiritual" welfare of their beneficiaries. Frequently it is found that the administrative costs of such "Missions" advertised with such a show of charitable and philanthropic intent, far exceed the amounts made available for the succour of the poor persons whom they profess to serve. But the servant of the Lord must never go without his (monetary) reward! The Labourer in the Lord's Vineyard is careful to see that his *hire* as well as his calling and election is sure. Occasionally that type of labourer has a disconcerting experience when his organization's books come to be investigated and

audited, and he finds himself in the Dock confronting a magistrate, who will not accept a plea of belief in the supernatural as any sort of a defence to a charge of embezzlement.

If the Christian Deity in his ineffable wisdom had so organized human society that every individual member of it had, as we say in Scotland, a "fair crack of the whip"—i.e., if the parasites had been put in their proper places, and each human being given equal opportunity by as complete an education in secular matters as possible, and provided with means and facilities for acquiring as much *knowledge* as possible, instead of being made to swallow, without question, the fictions of supernaturalism, it would have been a different, and better, story; but it would not have suited the book of clericalism. For, eliminate the greater part of preventible evil and pain, and you leave the clerics and their lay co-adjutors with practically no material to work upon. Make the vast majority of mankind fully enlightened and the occupation of the ecclesiastical Othellos is gone! And how could anyone, observant of history, imagine that the Christian God was going to allow unlimited opportunities of acquiring knowledge to human beings? It would be a repudiation of himself by himself! And that is just where Humanism and Godism come to grips.

In this present sorry scramble of every one for himself, and the Devil take the hindmost; in the fierce heat of modern competition—not merely in physical, but in mental and moral respects, the Churches have been obliged to resort to more modern and often very meretricious methods of boosting themselves and crying their wares. John Bunyan in his *Vanity Fair* in the *Pilgrim's Progress* wanted people to see a picture of the Pagan and unbelieving world; but, by my sooth, does not the picture now fit the Christian Church when one takes a comprehensive survey of its activities? "Come ye apart and be ye separate," and "Ye are not of the world," were the old teachings; but nowadays, with clerical-cum-military shows gaudy bazaars, ecclesiastical sporting contests, charity balls, and entertainments, and various other kinds of jamborees got up to find funds *from any source* for the maintenance of religion, where is the evidence of the old time separateness? Of course all these things constitute a confession of failure because the ecclesiastical leaders have recognized that they cannot retain the allegiance of the majority of the laity without secular entertainments and amusements. Thus it is that among Nonconformists we hear so much praise of the "Institutional" Church, while the Established Church tempts the throng with elaborate ritual, sensuous appeals and attractive music.

When the embryo cleric enters his theological college, he is first of all inoculated and indoctrinated with the belief, which permeates all his future study, that he is entering on a career in which God Almighty alone is his Boss, and that he is not to be answerable to any other human being, once he is ordained to the office of preacher and pastor. This is the essential thing that accounts for parsonic assurance, conceit and brazen impudence. With whatever airs of humility and graciousness that essential thing may be cloaked, it is still there in the very heart of every cleric. He is an ambassador of God Almighty—he is a qualified exponent of the Queen of the Sciences—that is to say—Theology! Well, can the cleric, any more than anybody else, both have his cake and eat it? Is he of this world or is he not? One can no more be a dualist than one can make two and two five. The Church is losing its grip because it is running with the hare and hunting with the hounds; and people are getting into the know!

The writer once heard of an instance in Scotland, which shows the astuteness of the clerical mind. When their college vacation was approaching, two Presbyterian students in their fourth year of study conceived the idea of conducting a fortnight's evangelistic meetings in an area where an ingenuous and evangelical minister was placed. They approached him on the matter, and he at once enthusiastically commended their project. Before they left him he furnished them with a list of his elders. The students then drew up a document in the form of a guarantee for the signature of the elders purporting to guarantee remuneration of £10 10s. to each of the students for his fortnight's services. One of the elders mentioned the matter to the writer before signing the document; and while the writer said he had no right to presume to advise, he also said that if he himself had been one of the elders to whom the document was submitted, he would certainly have declined to sign it. It is not always a catch being an elder in a Scottish Kirk—though there may be a catch in accepting ordination to such an office!

For business and social reasons, many laymen no doubt often subject themselves to what is nothing but a species of extortion. A clergyman can do a person in a small way of business considerable harm, not necessarily by any definite statements, but by suggestions and innuendoes; so that people in trade, and particularly young people just starting in business, find it policy to submit to what is nothing more or less than a kind of blackmail. Woe betide the small tobaccoist in the pious suburban area who dares to exhibit the *Freethinker* in his window!

Yes, it is really wonderful what a lot of side lines there are in the promulgation of the Gospel story. There are plums of course; but there are also pickings. Piety can be made to pay!

IGNOTUS.

Correspondence

TWO FACTS CONCERNING INGERSOLL

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—There are two little slips (I will not say errors) in your valuable little book *Bradlaugh and Ingersoll*. On page 135 you say, "The elder Ingersoll (Father of Robert Green) was first a Congregationalist, then a hard-baked Presbyterian." The fact is that in Rev. John Ingersoll's preaching days the Congregationalists and the Presbyterians had the same doctrines—both were Calvinistic. They exchanged ministers and sometimes the Rev. Mr. Ingersoll preached for one, and at other times for the other, as his ministerial record proves.

The other is on page 180, where you say Ingersoll "practically made Blaine's nomination certain when it was before very uncertain." When Ingersoll made his famous speech nominating Blaine in 1876, he was not nominated, American history now concedes that Blaine, while a brilliant man, was one of the most corrupt in American politics, using his position in Congress to feather his own nest by giving favours to great corporations. By doing this he became rich. The facts proving this were laid bare just before the convention of 1876, where he was defeated notwithstanding the great eloquence. He was also defeated in the convention of 1880. In 1884 he managed to be nominated against great opposition, which split the party, and he was defeated at the polls. After 1876 Ingersoll ceased to support him and used his influence in behalf of other men, notably Garfield and Gresham.

FRANKLIN STEINER.

Secretary American Rationalist Association.

REACTION IN FREETHOUGHT

"The Bird of Time has but a little way
To flutter—and the Bird is on the Wing."

SIR,—In his article on June 6, 1934, Mr. E. Egerton Stafford went far beyond the point "on principle" in the Editor's note, with which this controversy started. In brief, one cannot deal with all the points in his long article—especially as it bristles with errors, in logic and in fact. However, a categorical statement on a few minor points may clarify the introduction to the original issue.

1. There are—in Great Britain—at least three Parties, outside the British Communist Party and the Labour Party, which claim to be "Scientific" and "Marxist." Each denounces all the others: each claims to be "scientific" in its theory and policy! They appear to be worse than "scientific" theologians.

2. I know many Freethinkers who reject the theory and policy of Revolutionary Communism. None of them does so because of any theoretical or abstract reasoning. All do so from realist and practical experience. In almost every Trade Union and in the Political field, the British Revolutionary Communists cause bitter dissension by their anti-Parliamentary advocacy, and by their policy of strikes, leading up to a *real* General Strike—which means Civil War. That is no theoretical consideration, but a hard, practical, fact. It is from that, that the bitterness arises.

3. Lenin, with all his great powers, could never have succeeded in "his" Revolution; had it not been for the unique, peculiar, particular, circumstances in Russia, arising out of the war and from the previous social, economic, and political, conditions. To imagine that what a physical force Revolution did in Russia, at a certain time under certain conditions, can be done in the same way in Great Britain now, is *not* scientific: it is not rational: it is completely, "out of touch with the world of reality." This might be styled the main fallacy underlying the policy of the British Revolutionary Communists. It is condemned by the whole course of British history. However, it brings us to the original issue.

Mr. E. Egerton Stafford complained that Mr. Chapman Cohen—like many Freethinkers—condemned Dictatorship, as Dictatorship, on principle and irrespective of its purpose; while, at the same time, he makes a distinction between slavery in Pagan and in Christian times. Mr. Stafford accuses Mr. Cohen of inconsistency: he considers he has clinched his case by two quotations from Chapman Cohen's *Christianity and Slavery*. We can thank Mr. Stafford for his quotes. They justify the position of "many Freethinkers"; and they condemn the physical force policy of the British Revolutionary Communists.

This can be proved—to any *intelligent* person—by substituting terms, as necessary, in the two cases. Putting the substituted words in italics, the quotes then read: "There is always the important distinction that, while *Lenin's Revolution* represented a phase of social development, and tended to something better, *the British Communists' Revolution* would stand for a deliberate retrogression in social life. *Christianity and Slavery*, p. 11. The second quote reads: "*Revolutionary Communism* gives just that *pseudo-scientific* sanction which *Physical Force* requires for its ethical justification. *Physical Force* applied to 'Reds' is revolting, *Physical Force* applied to *Blacks, Whites, Browns, Greens, or Pinks*, becomes part of the *revolutionary* appointed order. Next, because *Physical Force* was, so to speak, native in *Russian* society, the growth of *Lenin's Force* tended to eliminate the harsher features of the system, and to move in the direction of its abolition." *Ibid*, p. 13.

'Nuff said. Mr. E. Egerton Stafford's own case is, dialectically, burst by his own quotes.

All the Socialist or Communist Parties—scientific or sentimental—are out for Political Power. By Political Power they hope to change social, economic, and political, conditions. They hope to be—sometime—in a Majority.

Freethinkers—as Freethinkers—strive for a different purpose. Freethinkers, JUST BECAUSE THEY ARE FREETHINKERS, can never expect to be more than a mere minority—at least for a long, long, time to come.

Let us continue our Work.

La vereco devigas. La verité oblige.

ATHOSO ZENOO.

SIR,—In reply to G. H. Taylor (*Freethinker*, August 19) I must protest against being charged with having changed my ground, when I have not done so. Obviously, the expression, “those who by speech and writing seek to persuade others to *prevent* the upbuilding of a Socialist society” means the same as “any attempt to *put into action* opinions directed against the construction of a Socialist State.”

For the rest, Mr. Taylor's letter is a plea for vagueness in Freethought, except he agrees that Freethinkers should study Communism.

Up to now, the discussion which has followed the issue of my article on “Reaction in Freethought,” has brought out fairly clearly the dialectical process at work within the N.S.S.

In the main, two tendencies are at work. Most Freethinkers are seeking refuge in theoretical talk about the right of everyone to “support the political sect he favours,” with no desire that Freethought should reach a definite main line of action on social problems; while some few Freethinkers are contending that the question of Marxist-Leninist Communism must be faced.

Replies to my article have not squarely faced the issue. They have misrepresented me; restated the vague Freethought which I am up against; revealed misunderstanding of my contentions; and, generally evaded the issue by treating Freethought as something which we can have apart from social evolution.

Mr. Cutner (July 8) prefers to stand aside from everything and thus remain a Freethinker; Medicus lulls his fear that Communism seeks to make us all the same by telling us of “resistance to that pressure from without, which would otherwise flatten us into a homogenous mass” (August 19); G. H. Taylor puts forward the fantastic idea that “political theories are not susceptible to the factual test” (August 19), and proceeds to write on “Dialectical Materialism”; while the editorial list of questions (July 29), intended to reveal the real issues and put us all right, just serves as a smoke-screen behind which one can try to avoid facing the problem of the world crisis. Over against all this lies the choice between Fascism and Communism.

The pressure of events is revealing the contradictions within “Freethought,” and sooner or later we shall find many Freethinkers who claim “Freethought” as standing for progress, consciously taking the side of reaction in social matters. Will they constitute the majority in the N.S.S.?

E. EGERTON STAFFORD.

[This controversy must now close. Whatever contradictions exist within Freethought are not likely to be removed by a repetition of phrases.—Ed. *Freethinker*.]

CREATION

The idea of a mighty Maker of things may safely be attributed to men as low in intelligence as are the lowest tribes now extant, for it appears very early in the child. The first definite inquiries about causes are usually made towards the end of the second year. After that time the question, “What makes that?” is for many months frequently on the child's lips. A little later on, however, he passes from particular problems to the general one, and thinks of a personal Creator. If children five years old begin of themselves to inquire into the origin of the world, one must admit the presence of such queries in the mind of the most intelligent individuals of the lowest tribes.—James H. Leuba, “*A Psychological Study of Religion*.”

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BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCHES N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 6.0, Mrs. E. Grout—“Christianity and Civilization.”

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Sunday, August 26, Mr. C. Tuson. Highbury Corner, 8.0, Mr. W. P. Campbell Everden. South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Monday, August 27, Mr. W. P. Campbell Everden. Highbury Corner, 8.0, Thursday, August 30, Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 7.30, Sunday, August 26, Mr. L. Ebury. Rushcroft Road, near Brixton Town Hall, 8.0, Tuesday, August 28, Mr. P. Goldman. Stonhouse Street, High Street, Clapham, 8.0, Wednesday, August 29, Mr. E. C. Smith.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Sunday, Mr. W. B. Collins. 3.30, Platform No. 1, Messrs. Wood and Bryant. Platform No. 2, Messrs. Saphin and Tuson. 6.30, Platform No. 1, Messrs. Collins and Hyatt. Platform No. 2, Messrs. Saphin and others. Wednesday, 7.30, Two Lectures. Thursday, 7.30, Messrs. Wood and Saphin. Friday, 7.30, Two Lectures.

WEST HAM BRANCH (Corner of Deanery Road, opposite the Library, Water Lane, Stratford, E.): 7.0, Mr. I. Greenhouse.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 8.30, Monday, August 27, Members' Meeting. Business very important.

OUTDOOR.

BARDEN LANE, BURNLEY, 8.0, Tuesday, August 28, Mr. J. Clayton.

BRIGHTON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Level): 3.30, Mr. J. T. Byrne—“The Vatican and Russia.”

CRAWSHAWBOOTH: 7.30, Monday, August 27, Mr. J. Clayton.

CROOK (Market Place): 7.0, Friday, August 31, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (West Regent Street): 7.30, Mr. R. T. White.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Corner of High Park Street and Park Road): 8.0, Thursday, August 23, Messrs. J. V. Shortt and C. McKelvie. Queens' Drive, opposite Walton Street Baths, 8.0, Mr. G. Whitehead will speak from Saturday, August 25 to Wednesday, August 29 and also Friday, August 31. High Park Street and Park Road, 8.0, Thursday, August 30, Mr. G. Whitehead.

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