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Views and Opinions

The Burden of Man

MAN is an evolutionary product and his ancestry has imposed on him two burdens—one physical the other mental. Looked at as a physical structure the human body resembles an ancient building that has been adapted to meet modern requirements by the use of the latest inventions in heating, lighting and sanitation. These inventions work, but they would function with much greater economy and efficiency if the architect had been given the task of constructing the building from the ground up. It is equally certain that given the power, a modern scientist would have constructed a man much better, physically, than the present one. The faults of the human structure has been stressed by experts, even while they have marvelled at the way in which adaptations to altered conditions have been secured. But withal the human body bears the marks of an adapted structure. Nature is indeed both wasteful and miserly in its work. It is extravagant in its experiments, and niggardly in the way in which it uses old materials to new ends.

The other burden that man has to carry is mainly that of words coined to express old thoughts and thought-forms that belong to a state of culture he has outgrown. Language, as I have pointed out earlier in these articles, is at once a vehicle and a determinant of thought; it is hammered out under pressure of feeling and in its formative period the same terms that are used to express man's relations to his fellow humans are also used to express his relations to nature at large. Language is thus in its origin heavily charged with anthropomorphic implications, and in the very act of trying to express new ideas man finds that he is often suggesting old ones. Such terms as kindness and cruelty, goodness and badness, are applied to nature when they have their only proper application to the deliberate actions of conscious beings. We borrow the language of human intention and

human passion to express operations in which intention and passion are absent. Some of us are sufficiently on our guard to know the dangerous nature of the tools we are using, but with the majority the influence of the words used are fatal to exact and scientific thought.

* * *

The Dawn of Science

A very suggestive writer, John Beattie Crozier, divided human history into two main parts. In one the governing conception is that of "wills" in the other that of "causes." I think the division is substantially a sound one, although it must be borne in mind that the two stages exist side by side, often in the same mind. But the difficulty in the history of human mental evolution is that of initiating the change from the state in which natural phenomena is regarded as being a product of "wills" to that in which they are treated as the outcome of the play of non-conscious forces. The passage from the supernatural to the natural is the most important step ever made in the history of mankind; it marked the emergence of a new kind of thinking, and the opening of a conflict that is still in being.

So far as we know, and so far as can be seen, this first step towards the creation of pure science was taken by the ancient Greeks. It meant the definite marking out of at least an area of human thought that was independent of the gods. Man had to acquire the confidence that he could achieve certain ends without either the consent or the co-operation of those monstrous beings that primitive thought had created. Right through the golden age of Greek philosophy there runs the insistent search for some first principle, some primary "substance" from which all else should follow by strict necessity. The search was for the "One" from which the "Many" came, the understanding of a process by which the "Many" was again resolved into the "One." There was here the germ of an evolutionary philosophy of nature from which much might have come; but the rule of the Church intervened, and centuries had to elapse before the scientific quality of the Greek mind was restored to the European world.

The search for this primary substance led to various speculations as to its nature. It was air, fire, water, ether, even so obvious an abstraction as number—Sir James Jeans was not the first to treat an abstraction as though it were a concrete reality. But the most fruitful and the most permanent conception of all was that of the early materialists who assumed the existence of infinite atoms of matter moving in infinite space, and who held that from the combinations and permutations of the atoms all things resulted. This original conception of "matter" as a hard impenetrable substance has undergone many changes—the most drastic within recent years—and each alteration has

foolishly been hailed as registering the downfall of Materialism. As a matter of plain fact, Materialism is not at all concerned with the ultimate conception of the nature of "matter," its basis being the postulate that natural phenomena are complexes of natural forces ultimately explainable in terms of "law." The conception of the early materialists was unquestionably the most fruitful contribution ever made to the history of science; and even to-day it holds the field, for the newest conceptions upon which so many of our popular scientists build their pleas for religion, have only replaced the atom of "matter" by an atom of "energy," thus leaving the atomic conception substantially unaltered. Materialism has been killed by replacing it with something of the same kind.

* * *

Do We Know?

I am trying to explain the significance in the history of philosophy of that mysterious creation the "thing-in-itself," the way in which it has been made to do duty for a God, and the confusion created by loose talk of "reality"—as though the only thing that is real is something that we do not know and never can know, and of the way in which even avowed Freethinkers of standing have been submerged in this morass of false metaphysics, and have thus played into the hands of certain kinds of theists. How did the idea of a thing-in-itself, apart from the things we know, of a world of reality distinct from the world of experience and knowledge, come into existence? To answer these questions I have to tell a long history in a few paragraphs.

Freedom of discussion among the Greeks, the fact of their being without the twin curse of modern Europe, a sacred book and a powerful priesthood, led to the creation of science, as distinguished from mere knowledge. And it was not long before the discussion of what man knew about the world led to the propounding of the deeper question, that of the nature and trustworthiness of his knowing. The question of "What do we know?" led to the deeper question of, "How do we know?" It was quite evident that the only avenue by which man acquired knowledge was that of the senses. But if all men were blind, what should we know of a world of colour? If all men were deaf, should we live in a world of sound? Clearly, the world we know is a world as given immediately through our senses. But then comes the further question: Are these senses reliable in such a fashion that they give us a world in relation to the senses that is identical with the world as it exists out of relation to our senses? In other words, is the world as presented to us in consciousness identical with the world as it exists outside of and out of relation with consciousness?

Stated in this way it seemed to many then, and so it seemed for many centuries afterwards, to land one in complete scepticism. For it was plain that if we cannot get outside consciousness, it is impossible to tell what the world is like apart from consciousness. And it is precisely here that there is room for a genuine Agnosticism, as distinguished from the mixture of mental confusion and timidity that seeks to identify Agnosticism with the question of a God. We may believe in the existence of a world apart from consciousness while holding that the conditions of knowing prevent our ever having any certain knowledge about it, but it is laughably stupid to profess to be Agnostic regarding the *existence* of a God, without knowing what is meant by God. It is the confusion of the two distinct questions that enables the timid or muddled Atheist to pose as a reverent Agnostic.

A very ugly word "epistemology" is the name given to this question of the nature of knowledge, and at bottom all philosophical questions tend to revert to it. Calling ultimate existence "mind" is no more helpful than calling it "matter." The puzzle is not escaped by these verbal devices, it is merely evaded. To talk of "matter" in itself as distinct from the matter we know in consciousness, or "mind" as distinct from the "mind" we know, or to deny that we have any knowledge of a "real" world at all, is to end in confusion, or to commit intellectual suicide. The question really needs restating. A satisfactory answer was made impossible by the way in which the question was put.

* * *

A Metaphysical Nightmare

The question at issue is, "What is the nature of the world of my perception?" Does it exist independently of me, or is it a creation of my mind? To this question there are various answers. There is one, held by no one to-day who understands the nature of the question, and of the sense organs, that the world exists in complete independence of me exactly as I see it. There is the answer of Locke that underlying the world of sensation there is a "substance"—matter—of which we know the primary qualities—extension, mass, etc.—the other qualities being contributed by the organism. And there is the answer given by Bishop Berkeley, that the real world is the world we know, and that it exists as an objective fact exactly as we know it. Berkeley did not deny objective existence, or the reality of an external world, indeed, his whole case depended upon the common view of an objective world being correct. He said this in as plain and in as direct language as it is possible to use. But he also said that the world we know is a world of colours, shapes, resistances, in a word, our knowledge is a knowledge of sensations, and of relations between sensations. But, he argued, sensations cannot exist apart from a "mind," and as the world exists apart from the mind of man, we must assume that it exists as a series of emanations from a supreme mind—God. This was Berkeley's method of getting over the implied Atheism of Locke, and of establishing a proof of the existence of God. There is a great fallacy here, but it is not that of the cheap misunderstanding which says that Berkeley asserted the world exists in *my* mind. Those who speak of Berkeley in this strain have either never read him or do not understand him.

Finally—so far as my present purpose is concerned—there is the answer of Hume. Locke had assumed a "real" world of "Matter," of which we know only certain primary qualities. Berkeley by an acute analysis of knowledge, showed that the assumption of primary as distinct from secondary qualities was useless as explanation, and carried us no farther along the road of understanding. His answer was the existence of the world as a direct product of the "mind" of God. Hume took Berkeley's analysis of knowledge for granted, agreed with him that there was no justification for assuming the existence of an entity "matter," but applied exactly the same argument to the belief in a mysterious entity "mind." Just what Berkeley said of Matter Hume said of Mind. He said, when I examine myself I find sensations, memories of sensations and relations between sensations, but I never come across "Mind" as a substantive existence, and that wiped out Berkeley's proof of a God. It left the world as a nexus of sensations which constitute the world as we know it. Accept Berkeley's argument against Locke, and we are compelled to accept Hume against Berkeley. We can accept the Freethinker Hume against the Christian

Bishop only so long as we accept the Christian Bishop against the Freethinking Locke. There is no reason whatever for accepting "Mind" as a substantive existence; but neither is there logical reason for accepting "Matter" as a substantive existence. "The thing-in-itself" is as useless as it is ridiculous, whether we call it mind, or matter, or "existence" understanding by these terms a matter or a mind, or an existence that is different from the matter and mind and existence that we know. There is a use for all these terms, so long as we use them in a strictly scientific sense. The curious thing is that so many Freethinkers should have gone on eagerly accepting Hume's analysis and as eagerly rejecting Berkeley's not realizing that the two are alike, although utilized to different ends.

Perhaps I ought to apologize for so lengthy a dose of this kind of thing in a weekly paper, but, as I have said before, the *Freethinker* is not an ordinary paper, and therefore its readers cannot be quite ordinary folk.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Courage of Carlile

"My heart, O my soldiers, my veterans,
My heart gives you love."—*Whitman*.

"Liberty, a word without which all other words are vain."—*Ingersoll*.

"THE old guard dies, but never surrenders." The famous saying leaps to the mind at the mere mention of the name of the lion-hearted Richard Carlile. The story of his struggles is an important part of the history of British Freethought, and it is a plain tale of a hero fighting at fearful odds against tyranny, and leaving an imperishable name. Carlile's was the true soldier's temperament, supported by the unshakable principles without which no great purpose can be achieved. No misfortune disconcerted him; no defeat cowed his indomitable spirit. He could not be bullied or frightened, although Freethought was then fighting for its very existence. Superstition, effectively disguised in the ermine of the judge, was strongly entrenched, and contemptuous enough of the little band of pioneers whose evangel has left its mark on the intellectual history of the world. In the darkest days of the Freethought Movement, Carlile and his brave colleagues never lost heart, for they knew the longer they lay in prison the greater triumph would be won for the cause they had at heart.

Recall the bare facts. Carlile himself suffered nine and a half year's imprisonment for championing freedom of speech. His wife, and other members of his family, and his shop assistants, divided among them fifty years' confinement in gaols. And what a man was the leader, that vivid, dynamic personality; all aglow with enthusiasm, who diffused energy all about him, and whose very presence caused stimulation.

Carlile, like G. W. Foote, was a son of the West Country. Self-educated, he collected faggots to burn in effigy "Tom Paine," the Guy Fawkes of that period, whose writings in after life were to influence him so deeply. For he was a man of twenty-five before he read Paine's virile works, which roused him like a trumpet-blast. Henceforth he was the dauntless champion of Freethought and free speech. Taxes were then placed on knowledge, and fine and imprisonment faced all who dared to speak or write of religious or political liberty. England was then ruled by a crazy king, a profligate regent, and a corrupt government, but Carlile, a poor man, defied the plutocratic Cerberus of Authority, and broke the fetters of press despotism. For, remember, the press

to him was not a mere purveyor of sensation, silliness, and scandal. It was a vehicle of ideas, a pulpit from which the evangel of Liberty could be proclaimed, a trumpet to summon men to battle against wrong.

Alive in every fibre, Carlile was the very man to lead a forlorn hope to victory. Handcuffed and imprisoned, he roused the public conscience, and compelled the all-powerful authorities to cry "halt." It was impossible to suppress him; it was but punching a pillow. When a score of his assistants had been sent to prison for selling Freethought literature, the prosecuted books were sold by a slot-machine, probably the first of its kind. Among the books were Paine's *Age of Reason*, Annet's *Life of David*, Voltaire's publications, Palmer's *Principles of Nature*, and many other thunderous engines of revolt. When his stocks were seized by the authorities, Carlile read nearly the whole of *The Age of Reason* in his speech for the defence, so that additional publicity should be given to the matter sought to be suppressed.

Nor were imprisonment and the destruction of literature the only punishments inflicted, for fines, amounting to thousands of pounds, were imposed. To annoy his persecutors, Carlile dated his letters from gaol "the era of the carpenter's wife's son." Superior folk may lift their eyebrows at such audacity; but the fiery, restless courage which accounted for it is a very rare quality which the world can very ill spare. What it can achieve needs no record; it is written on history's page in a life and actions as heroic as any quoted in the immortal pages of Plutarch. Fighting the embattled hosts of superstition, the victory remained to this stout-hearted Freethinker. Writing from gaol in the sixth year of his imprisonment, he was able to say, "All the publications that have been prosecuted have been, and are continued in open sale." What matchless courage! "The sound of it is like the ring of Roman swords on the helmets of barbarians." Small wonder that the two greatest poets of his time, Keats and Shelley, recognized that he was a true hero battling for liberty, the dearest possession of man.

Carlile's victory over his opponents was so complete that his later years were spent in comparative peace at Enfield, where he died in 1843. True to the end in his devotion to science and humanity, he bequeathed his body to Dr. Lawrence for the purpose of dissection and the advancement of knowledge. His funeral at Kensal Green Cemetery was the occasion of an exhibition of priestly spite. At the interment a parson appeared and insisted on reading the burial service. In spite of the protests of his eldest son, the clergyman persisted, and the last insult of the Church was hurled at the dead hero. Carlile's brave wife survived him only a few months, and she was buried in the same grave. Thus ended the career of one who, as Browning has it, was "ever a fighter," strenuous, eager, unsparing, but he had, as was said of Byron, the "imperishable excellence of sincerity and strength."

Such heroism was not without definite result. Twenty-three years after Carlile's death organized Freethought was an accomplished fact, for in 1866 the National Secular Society was founded, the first President being the able and courageous Charles Bradlaugh. Under his leadership, and that of his brilliant successors, G. W. Foote and Chapman Cohen, this Society has ever been in the vanguard of progress, sheltering behind it all the weaker heterodox people, who otherwise had been crushed by the very weight of Orthodoxy. Behind militant Freethought all forms of advanced thought have moved to some measure of freedom. The greater the perils, the greater the victory, and in the ripe years to come

recognition must be given to the superb courage displayed by Carlyle and his comrades. Disregarding self-interest, they were satisfied with the proud knowledge that their sufferings would diffuse the blessings of Liberty to countless thousands. So true is it:—

"The greatest gift the hero leaves his race
Is to have been a hero. Say, we fail?
We feed the high tradition of the world,
And leave our spirits in our children's breasts."

MIMNERMUS.

Religious Belief and Reality

In childhood we learn many things that, as we grow older, we find to be untrue, such as the story of Father Christmas, fairy tales, and those of the Jack the Giant-killer type. They amuse the child and do no harm. We may abandon them with regret, but no one stands up in their defence, and we cease to believe in them.

But in the matter of religious belief it is very different. Many people who would like to retain beliefs associated with their childhood and its memories—to say nothing of avoiding giving pain to believing relatives and friends—strive to compromise by discarding all the unpleasant and irrational parts, such as the miracles, asceticism, and future punishments; while retaining the so-called consolations, and the hope of a future existence of eternal happiness.

These people keep their religion apart from experience as far as possible, and endeavour to prevent their religious ideas from coming into collision with awkward facts. They are helped in this by the fact that ideas implanted in childhood are very tenacious, especially when they are taught with the impressive aid of awe and mystery, together with the serious consequences, social and spiritual, of unbelief.

If, in the past, large sums of money had been bequeathed to found scholarships for maintaining the truth of fairy tales, similar to the endowments for providing Christian scholarships, there is not the slightest doubt that we should have Doctors and Professors of Fairy Lore, quite as ingenious at finding plausible reasons for belief in the fairies as the theologians are for finding belief in Christianity. They certainly could not find more foolish ones than some of those advanced by learned clerics.

We have just been reading Mr. H. W. Nevinson's latest book (he has written about a score) *In the Dark Backward* (published by Routledge). Mr. Nevinson, as everyone knows, is a veteran journalist who has travelled all over the world. In 1904 he undertook the dangerous mission of investigating the horrors of the Portuguese slave trade in South Africa. During the first Balkan War, in 1912, he acted as war correspondent with the Bulgarian Army. During the Great War he acted, in the same capacity, in France, Gallipoli, Salonica, and Egypt, and his despatches are among the best ever written.

Mr. Nevinson's books, *Essays in Freedom and Rebellion*, and *England's Voice of Freedom*, are eloquent advocates of liberty and freedom; he was also a champion of women's suffrage, social reform, and all advanced movements. His present book is not concerned with journalism. It consists of eighteen "Scenes," each scene, consisting of a single chapter, is devoted to a vision of the past, ranging from ancient Troy to the Great War. Mr. Nevinson tells us that he has always lived two lives, one in the present and one in the past, and that this sense of a double life is felt most keenly among the relics of Greece and Rome.

The scenes depicted are not altogether visionary, but are founded upon history. The third scene, for instance, the famous retreat of the ten thousand Greeks from Sardis in Mesopotamia to Trebizond on the Black Sea, during five months, through difficult and hostile countries, is a condensed account of the retreat as described by Xenophon in his *Anabasis*. The fifth scene, entitled *Via Dolorosa* (The Path of Sorrow) is a condensed account of the condemnation and crucifixion of Christ, in which we learn that Mr. Nevinson was brought up in the belief that the Bible was the Word of God, in the Evangelical tradition; therefore, he continues: "Imbued with childhood's knowledge that years never quite obliterate, I came to Palestine as to a home long familiar by report, but never yet visited." Although he may have modified his early beliefs, he has never renounced them; he is still a Christian.

The sixth scene is staged at Spalato, built by the Roman Emperor Diocletian, and to which he retired in his old age. Speaking to Julianus, a Roman officer, the Emperor observes: "Close beyond every frontier those huge clouds of savages are gathered, waiting to burst with inundation over all that Romans mean by the State, Civility, and Manners." Proudly he declares:—

For twenty-one years I ruled the world—I, Diocletian, the slave-boy from those Dalmatian hills down yonder, I saved the world—saved it from savages—Goths, Germans, Persians, Parthians, and the rest. Continually, like clouds in storm, they kept pressing down over the sunlit prospect of the Empire, and I drove them back to the dismal regions which they inhabit. All that is worth preserving in mankind I preserved. The mists and obscurities which threatened to envelop the clearest reason of the world I also swept away, as with a health-giving breeze. (H. W. Nevinson: *In the Dark Backward*. p. 89.)

We then see the death in the arena of two centuries, Roman soldiers, who, being converts to the new religion of Christianity, threw down their arms, refusing to fight for the Empire's safety; upon which the Emperor comments:—

No more unpardonable treason to Rome could be imagined than a refusal to fight in her defence. These pitiful wretches enjoy the peace and splendour of Rome, but will not move a finger to protect or extend either. The city, the State, the Empire, are nothing to them. Such people brood only over their own condition, and the preservation of souls. They undertake no public duties. They refuse to act as judges or magistrates, and even their pleasures are private and selfishly concealed. They appear to live in a kind of ecstatic hysteria, scorning reason, avoiding social life, and looking forward with joyous expectation to the speedy destruction, not only of our Roman world, but of the whole human race. For the protection of humanity, I resolved some five or six years ago to extirpate their desperate superstition, and in that, at all events, I shall succeed.

"You are right," said Julianus; "if such treasonable opinions spread, no state—not even the smallest city—could survive in this world of perpetual conflict. And the best way of silencing pernicious opinions is to silence those who hold them." (p. 105.)

However, the Christians did increase and multiply, and eventually succeeded in bringing to ruin the greatest step forward in the progress and civilization of the world and inaugurating a thousand years of barbarism, the Christian Dark Ages. To return to the scene of the *Via Dolorosa*, Mr. Nevinson refers to the "heated and bloodthirsty disputes in the early years of the Church and the early Middle Ages." "Like a long series of wrathful skeletons or fanatical ghosts, the various sectaries of Christian belief

passed before me—Arians and Athanasians, Gnostics, Ebionites, Docetans, Anthropomorphites, Armenians, Jacobites, Montanists, Nestorians, Chaldeans," and a number of others, of which Mr. Nevinson observes:

The distinctions between all these sects and heresies are hardly comprehensible except to the inspired subtlety of theological brains. Yet in the days of their origins the hardly perceptible differences and dogmas were matters of life and death, urged with a conviction so self-assured and a hostility so envenomed that hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children were slaughtered in their defence or denial, and controversies over the unity or double-nature of Christ's person or will caused as many violent deaths as the denial or assertion of his divinity. . . . Even before the birth of Christ we hear of philosophic feuds, though I do not remember records of slaughter between Platonists and Aristotelians, or between Stoics and Epicureans. But it appears strange that the most terrible religious or philosophic conflicts in history should have raged round that sensitive, infinitely charitable, and forgiving figure who was once marched to a peculiarly cruel execution. (pp. 83-84.)

We see nothing strange in the matter at all. The Pagan philosophers were free to argue without fear of consequences, the Christians were not; those who did not hold the right belief incurred fearful penalties in the shape of eternal torments. The day of judgment was at hand, when the world would pass away. What did the glorious empire signify in the face of this prospect? Less than the dust in the balance. Mr. Nevinson has probably, as so many Christians have, discarded all belief in eternal torment; therefore he cannot enter into the feelings and understand the fanaticism of the early Christians which succeeded in breaking and destroying the once mighty and beneficent Roman Empire.

W. MANN.

Obiter Dicta

WHEN I went to school, one of the poems which we were required inwardly to digest was the "Execution of Montrose."

I remember, in that poem, the line, "through high Dunedin's streets that day," and I remember also, being told by my schoolmaster that Dunedin was the old name of Edinburgh.

Some years afterwards I went to Dunedin—no not Edinburgh—but the wee Scots city which is the capital of the Province of Otago, in the Dominion of New Zealand, and where half a decade ago it was considered papistical to celebrate Christmas.

Strange as it may seem, it was in this city of respectable church-going Presbyterians that I bade farewell to God and Son, including, of course, the third party to the contract, the Holy Ghost.

Dunedin, of course, is not entirely composed of Presbyterians, which is perhaps just as well. At least I was inclined to think that it was a good thing that there were several variations of Christianity. But, as I was not a Presbyterian, I may perhaps have revealed a little bigotry in arriving at this conclusion.

Right in the heart almost of the city, which is a pocket edition of Edinburgh, is St. Joseph's Cathedral. It stands on a hill, and it is this fact which perhaps gives one the impression that it throws out a challenge to the great majority, by which I mean, of course, the Presbyterians.

Now I must digress a little. In those days when parental authority was a force to be reckoned with, I was compelled to make an exhaustive study of a small pink-jacketed book called the Catechism, and

from that instructive little volume I learned that "the Church has four marks by which we may know her. She is one, she is holy, she is Catholic, and she is apostolic."

After this digression, nobody will conclude that St. Joseph's is an Anglican or Greek Cathedral.

I retain a certain amount of affection for "Joey's," for it was in that "sacred edifice" that I did what all good Catholics do at intermittent periods, *i.e.*, I went to confession—for the last time.

My "sins" did not consist of drunkenness, theft, etc., but were of a more serious nature, such as missing mass on Sundays and doubting a good deal of the teaching of Sancta Mater Ecclesia.

For the last mentioned "sin," I must blame Ernst Haeckel, whose *Riddle of the Universe* I had read some weeks previous to kneeling at the feet of my confessor and repeating humbly, "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned."

There is one great shock from which I have not yet recovered concerning Dunedin. In fact there are two.

For the life of me I cannot understand how Mr. Chapman Cohen's record, "The Value of Free-thought," was put over the air in dour Dunedin.

The next shock concerns a different kind of shock, known as an earthquake. These seismic shocks make themselves felt at different times in the "Shivery Isles," as New Zealand has been facetiously dubbed, and if Dunedin is the next city to receive a good shaking up, I shall not be surprised.

There is only one city which I would say is holier than Dunedin, and that is Toronto. I believe it was Rupert Brooke who so aptly described Ontario's capital as "the largest village in the world."

If looks could kill, I would have been killed in Toronto. It happened in this wise. One Sabbath morning, finding myself minus cigarettes, I dared to knock on the front door of a store in one of the outer suburbs after a vain two hours' search for "smokes" in the city, and requested the female proprietor to let me have a packet of what I considered very necessary. I did not spend another Sunday in Toronto.

Montreal is holy too, but needless to say, in quite a different way. Cigar stores in that city trade on the Sabbath, and "smokes" of all kinds can be had in abundance. In Montreal they are evidently in accord with the late Father Bernard Vaughan's philosophy, *viz.*, that he preferred to do his smoking in this world rather than in the next. His preference recalls to my mind a mural painting which I saw in the Church of Notre Dame in Canada's Paris.

One morning, in order to keep my ears and nose from bidding farewell to the remainder of my physiognomy, as those organs are likely to do if one walks about too long in below zero weather, I entered the Church of Notre Dame, and one of the first things that caught my eye was the aforementioned mural painting. Suffering souls, mainly composed of males (this may be some comfort to the ladies) were depicted with all the gruesome reality the artist was capable of putting into his handicraft, making desperate struggles to extricate themselves from the purgatorial flames. Underneath was a box for donations for masses for these fortunate people. No, I must not use the prefix "un" before "fortunate," for does not Mother Church tell us that we are indeed fortunate if we go to Purgatory? How many go to Hell, out of which there is no redemption?

Farewell, Montreal.

Sydney calling. Sydney has a safety-valve known as the Domain. In this respect it resembles London, whose safety valve, I understand, is Hyde Park.

There are Catholic Evidence Guild speakers in the Sydney Domain, just as there are in the vicinity of the Marble Arch. Their "master," who is a barrister in this city, recently informed me, when I asked him what would happen to those who did not pray, that they would be damned. Ever since I have thought that the "Value of Freethought" should be broadcasted from Inverness to Invercargill, in the south of New Zealand.

If the Incitement to Disaffection Bill comes into force before this reaches London, I shall know the reason for its non-appearance in the *Freethinker*.

Our worthy Premier of this State of New South Wales has decided in his wisdom to introduce a Disloyalty Bill, so that, to descend to the vernacular, England "hasn't got it all on her own."

By the way Mr. Stevens' nickname is "Tubby," which reminds me that there is a reverend gentleman somewhere in England who rejoices in the same cognomen.

I think this screed should conclude with an anecdote, so here it is:—

A few months after the Apostolic Delegate (Archbishop Bernardini) arrived in Sydney, he paid a visit to a Catholic College, where the students lined up to give him a fitting welcome, and chanted "Vivat, vivat, vivat pastor bono."

When the head of the College, after bidding farewell to the prelate, returned to his classroom, he saw scribbled on the blackboard, obviously by a student in whom the Faith showed signs of weakening, a new rendering of the Latin, thus: "Beef fat, beef fat, beef fat Pastor Bonox."

J.M.K.

Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.

Acid Drops

We have all been "thrilled" by the news that Prince George has become engaged to the Princess Marina of Greece. The papers have duly recorded the immense delight of the British public—a plebiscite being taken inside the newspaper offices directly the news of the engagement came; and in due course, when the Princess comes to London she will be greeted by the same enthusiastic crowds that greet a well-known prize fighter, a film star, or a winning football team. And the extra £15,000 that is allowed the Prince for the maintenance of his wife will be paid regularly and eagerly by the public.

The *Daily Express* signalized the event by printing a special article with the information in big letters, "Her country gave the world civilization." Not quite true in fact, but with enough truth in it to pass without comment. To be complete, it should be said that it was pre-Christian Greece that gave the world an invaluable contribution towards its civilization. Christian Greece did its share, with the rest of Christian Europe, to degrade a legacy it could neither understand nor value.

The Rev. G. T. Peet writes to the *Daily Herald* explaining how the Labour Party may capture the Non-conformist vote. All it has to do is to plump for teetotalism, anti-gambling, and Sunday observance. Well, a great many Labour leaders have followed this kind of policy to a very considerable extent, and some Nonconformists do not appear to resent being treated as though they were mentally undeveloped. But we think the Rev. Peet is too modest in his proposals. Why not the literal inspiration of the Bible, the belief in witchcraft and in a literal hell? One might as well go the whole hog at once.

The *Times* gives the wording of the "Hitler Oath" administered to all the German clergy. It is said that eighteen thousand ministers have taken this oath of allegiance to the "Leader." The oath reeks of piety and obsequious obedience to absolute dictatorship. No doubt we shall be told again that religion is democratic, and that Hitler is an Atheist!

The Baptist International Congress at Berlin is said by some religious newspapers to have been "a bold defiance of dictatorship and all that it implies." We find no support for any such nonsense. The Baptists were welcomed by the Government, without whose dictatorial permit it could never have been held. According to the *Baptist Times*, surely the best authority, "The German Government pledged us full liberty, and no sort of interference was attempted." "A message of welcome came to us from a representative of the Government." Hitlerite Germany is in fact the "spiritual home" of pious pastors of all the sects.

A writer in the *Methodist Recorder* fills five columns of small-print space, to tell us that "the atmosphere" at a meeting of the Laymen's Movement at Swanwick "simply cannot be written about." Is it as bad as all that?

Mr. T. S. Gregory, in the *Methodist Recorder*, asks us, "Why am I a parson?" and as we cannot answer the poser, we pass to his description of "What did Jesus come to earth for?" This time we are given a negative sort of answer. "He did not come to make us nice good little men and women." Mr. Gregory believes "It is not doing right or being good that matters most." Of course not. It is believing the absurd in order to save the non-existent that really matters.

The Anglo-Catholics are not at all pleased with the selection of the preachers in the B.B.C. coming broadcast talks on "The Way to God." It seems that the speakers will be a Jesuit, a Congregationalist, a Scottish Presbyterian, and two Modernists. Fancy the way to God being shown by such heretical guides. We are surprised at Sir John Reith's lack of consideration for the tender feelings of Catholics who will have to hear a Scotch Presbyterian, of all people. There is only one way to God, as a matter of fact, and that is the Catholic way. Which Catholic way? Well, there you have us beaten. What does Sir John Reith say?

A correspondent to a church weekly refers to the claim made by quite a number of earnest and thoroughly devoted Christians, that "Our Lord's Mother" was not a Jewess. This is endorsed, he says, by Schleiermacher and Keim. It's a most interesting claim, as it disposes, once for all, of the assumption that the Genealogy in Luke really refers to Mary as the descendant of David; and as the Father of Jesus was the Holy Ghost, Jesus could thus not have been a descendant of David at all, and this makes the Jews quite right when they defiantly deny that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah. We think the best way would be to make Mary, German, and Jesus, a German Deity. This will save the Church a whole lot of bother with people who simply will not worship a Jewish God. At the moment, anyway, they prefer Hitler to Jesus.

In any case, Germany is going through a phase of most intense nationalism. Germans will not tolerate anything foreign in their language or religion. They are eschewing foreign words, customs and food. They seem to be ashamed at knowing a foreign language; and a German professor has declared that "It is not Christianity which has brought us civilization, but Christianity owes its lasting value to the Germanic character." We wonder which is sillier; the idea that Christianity has brought us civilization or whether it has any lasting value. Both conceptions are as grotesque as the "Aryan" or "Nordic" delusion. But religion is

in a chaotic state in Germany, and will be until some German professor proves conclusively that Jesus was pure "Nordic," and the Blessed Apostles pure "Aryan." That is sure to come.

The Master Bakers, whose solicitude for labour is so obvious and of such ancient date, are said to be "opposed to the slavery of the seven-day working week." This is magnificent. But wait. "And call for legislation prohibiting the sale and delivery of bread on Sunday." But why not cease employing men more than six or five days a week? Why drag in "Sunday"? What has that to do with it? Bread is still going to be made on Sundays.

A Seaside Meditation, by the Rev. F. H. Jeffs, is, of course, quite seasonable. It is natural enough to think of God when one sees a vast expanse of deep water where many lives are constantly being lost. The gospel says that once upon a time, eighteen hundred years ago, God intervened and saved some disciples of His. But He has since (and previously) drowned millions, some of whom have been quite as good disciples as any Hebrew fishermen.

A cleric writing in the *British Weekly*, protests against "the dreadful Moloch" of multitudinous services. He declares that "the ordinary business-man would not have time even to get his hair cut if he attended all the services he is asked to worship at." "He unhesitatingly declares that thirty per cent of these meetings held to-day are unnecessary, and definitely harmful to spiritual life." Of course, if we could be optimistic and think they were doing harm to religion we might disagree. But we are inclined to agreement. He wants 30 per cent abolished. We suggest adding the other seventy to the "discards."

How often has it been said that religion is a political movement against the forms of Government which the religious world dislikes. The Rev. Hickman Johnson says frankly: "Look at Russia, Italy, Turkey, Germany! If only we could get them to adopt the true ideal." And what is this ideal? Mr. Johnson replies: "I cannot do without the three seats of authority: the Bible, the Church, and the Holy Spirit." . . . "There is no hope for humanity if that ideal be not true." And as we know that these "ideals" are neither true nor helpful to mankind, are we to remain indifferent, simply because religionists see "no hope" outside their own absurdities?

Prof. Findlay is not at all sure about the authenticity of the old yarn, so pointless, so particularly inapt, that at some time between Good Friday and Easter Sunday, Jesus Christ "descended into hell." But why trouble about its truth or its absurdity? The Professor may not believe the story, but, as he puts it, "Whatever we may think of this notion, its spiritual meaning is as clear as it is reassuring, and I believe that the Church was divinely inspired to include it in its creed."

It must be very pleasant to know exactly what God knows, and what He means by it. The Rev. Dr. James Reid says that God "knows all about men's hunger for bread." "God has made that hunger." It appears according to this clever know-all, that God makes men hungry "because it sends us to work every day, and keeps us at it." But Dr. Reid is ingenious. He points out that the Lord's Prayer says "Give us our daily bread," not "Give ME." So long as this "Lord" provides us in the aggregate with enough food He is correctly answering "Our" prayer. We assume that if we ask for "our wages," it is quite immaterial whether the one gets all of it, or whether it is shared out to all who earned it. Those who pray should improve upon the "Lord's" prayer and hand in their own name and address if they happen to want any "daily bread."

The Rev. A. E. Baker has made a remarkable discovery—why Paul never mentions "Calvary." The reason he gives is that "the Cross of Christ is the centre of the world. His death is the supreme creative moment of the spiritual history of mankind." Mr. Baker obviously has never heard the other reason—possibly the true one. It is simply that there never was a Jesus crucified on Calvary. The "Christ Jesus crucified" of Paul is merely a Gnostic conception of a Christ—a sort of "Saviour," who, like all other similar saviours, was a myth pure and simple. In any case, Mr. Baker's solution of the problem is ludicrous, and explains nothing whatever. What about hard cash being "the centre of the world"?

Mr. Baker also considers that "seen in the light of what came out of it, the death of Christ is the best thing that ever happened." It looks as if he has only just found this out! Of course, for the clergy, the priest, the bishops, the Pope, and the various Churches, the death of Christ was a veritable God-send. It provided them with some of the finest and safest jobs men ever had during many centuries. It gave them a place in society entirely out of proportion to their worth or ability. It gave them a power over mankind almost impossible to believe—were it not proven by historic fact. Nothing more wonderful—for Christians—could have happened than the death of Christ, which has produced untold wealth from the pious dupes it has taken in. Yet Mr. Baker would be the last to forego blaming the Jews for such a marvellous occurrence. He ought to go on his bended knees to them for being the means by which he got his job.

A "parish priest" has been writing on the difficulties he encounters "teaching the faith in a Lancashire parish," and he does not at all like either the aggressiveness of Protestants against Anglo-Catholicism or the large number of conversions to Rome which take place every year by those who are impressed neither by Protestantism nor Anglo-Catholicism. This priest is up against a "very strong Protestant bias which is unreasoning and unreasonable," and also against the fact that "no people are more difficult to deal with than a Lancashire congregation once they have definitely made up their mind to go into opposition." All this goes to prove the essential unity and beautiful simplicity of the Christian religion; as well as its all-pervading love and beauty. It would be interesting to know exactly how many sects really flourish in Lancashire, and what they all think of each other. What a fine picture of "genuine" Christianity we should get!

The Germans (or Hitlerites) are proceeding apace, "Aryanizing" their Christian religion. The small boys have to wear a uniform and carry a knife on which is engraved "Blood and Honour," and have to join organizations of a more or less military character. The songs which they are obliged to sing are full of blood and fury. Here is a sample phrase: "We will, to-day, redder the iron with blood, with the blood of executioners and knaves." Almost as pretty as "Washed in the blood of the Lamb," which is sung with such gusto by millions of English Christians.

It is now on record that the strict line of demarkation between black and white Christians is to be abandoned at the conventions of the American Church, held this year in Atlantic City. Black priests can now actually eat at the same table, in some places with white Christians, and the rigid bans against "Reverend" negroes is to be raised in some hotels. But "they must not take rooms in any hotel except those run exclusively for blacks, or eat in hotel dining rooms." With what earnestness will the negroes thank God for His wonderful mercy and love at this striking proof that all in Christ are one!

The New Education Fellowship, holding its conferences in Cape Town, have been discussing native education. Professor Malinowski declared that "Education

is not merely schooling," and that "as we do not share our communal life with the native, we are not giving him a European education on European lines." General Smuts said, "He always stood up for the Christian mission," but he did not seem very enthusiastic about its results. On the other hand, Prof. Murray declared that "to teach loyalty to Christ should be the aim of the missionary," while Mr. H. Jowitt insisted that "the greatest integrative force in this critical period of Africa's cultural transition, is the dynamic and cohesive force of Christianity." Altogether, one can see that here again, as in so many instances, it is the Christian who has nobbled up the Conference and wants what history can prove is one of the greatest disruptive forces known, to be the guiding force in Africa. The "force" is really a "farce."

The first brick of the Metropolitan Roman Catholic Cathedral in Liverpool was laid the other day. The cost of this particular section will be nearly £1,000,000. The money will easily be found. For war and religion are the two prime raisers of money against which poverty and misery never can make headway.

Mr. Hilaire Belloc has discovered that Catholic and Christian Spain always "resolutely set her face against the revival of slavery." It was only because Catholic Spaniards found the work very hard in the colonies they had "conquered" from the Indians that they "secretly broke the law," and enriched themselves by "introducing" forced labour, even "at the risk of punishment at the hands of their own Government." In other words, Catholic Spain didn't have slaves; it was wicked Protestant England. It was the Protestant pirate, John Hawkins, who was responsible for making vast sums of money in the "abominable" traffic. He broke "all international law," even that of the good Catholic Spanish Christians.

Elizabeth, greedy Protestant Elizabeth, wanting money, backed up John Hawkins though "how far she was tempted by the disgraceful business we cannot tell." But Mr. Belloc has no doubt about William Cecil; in fact to read history aright, one must regretfully conclude that it was Protestant Christianity which was responsible for the slave trade, while God's only religion, Roman Catholicism, never had any truck with the "disgraceful business"; and there will be thousands of pious people who will follow Mr. Belloc in this delightful way of putting everybody "right" about history.

Of course the truth is that Christians, Protestant and Catholic, were responsible for slavery and Christianity backed them up so long as it paid, and so long as it could quote the Scriptures, and when everybody believed the Bible was the final word in everything. It was *Humanism*, introduced by Scepticism and Free-thought, which became the final arbiter in the foul business; and it is no wonder that Mr. Belloc, ashamed of slavery, should desperately attempt to absolve his own creed from its tremendous share in perpetuating one of the foulest blots that ever disgraced civilization.

Mr. Harry Fosdick writes about "The Revolt against Irreligion." He admits that "the advantages of revolt in recent years has been on the side of disbelievers." Many other pious souls "are sorely discouraged." Mr. Fosdick is not. He likes to fancy himself in the role of a rebel against all the hosts of the victorious Free-thinker. "We are in rebellion against a pagan world ruled by irreligion." He quotes nonsense written by that "reverend sceptic," Walter Lippmann, who said that "brave and brilliant Atheists have defied the Methodist God and have become very nervous." As for Mr. Fosdick, he is simply incapable of writing without hysteria. He pretends to believe that it was irreligion that "tore our world into bloody pieces and

made our children's earth a hell," and that "the Pagan deities are coming back again: Venus, Mars, Bacchus and Mercury."

Tastes proverbially differ. The Rev. John Bevan, who has "never read any book by D. H. Lawrence," yet states his "objection" to Lawrence because he "prefers the attitude of the life of St. Paul." Ignoring the difficulty of condemning books he has not read, Mr. Bevan evidently imagines Mr. Lawrence was guilty of a viler "attitude to life" than the author of that shocking outrage on humanity, the doctrine of "justification by faith," which has drenched the world with blood.

There is a pretty little storm raging within the Methodist Church about the existence of "Officers' Training Corps" in Methodist Colleges. Some Methodists take the view of Mr. C. E. Harris, who says he would never allow his children to attend a college which did not possess "a strong O.T.C." Dr. Rattenbury complains that "the extreme pacifists were too much heard at the recent Conference." To which the Rev. Percy Carden replies, "In future Conferences we Pacifists will be heard more and more." Attempts to crawl out of responsibility by pretending that only physical exercises are aimed at, are silenced by Mrs. Henderson, who points out that "these corps members wear military uniform, and are inspected by officers of the regular army."

Christians are always in the dilemma of "Sister Ann Ireland," who asks (in the *Methodist Recorder*) what alternative is there to "either accepting the recorded word of Jesus in settlement of problems, or of accepting some higher authority?" Well, Sister Ann, the "recorded word of Jesus" is not very clear as to the ethics of modern life. He is silent about the problems of to-day. He "answered never a word" when consulted about the difficulties of life in A.D. 1. He hedged when asked whether it was right to pay tribute to the invader. He knew what slavery was, but He made no objection to it. His famous recommendation of universal castration is a poor guide to marriage . . . by a bachelor. Sister Ann had better "accept some higher authority."

Fifty Years Ago

FIRST, the Bible has not challenged opposition and triumphed over it. The Church (to avoid the mischievous personification of a book) suppressed by sword and fire, as soon as she obtained power, the writings of all who dared to challenge her pretensions, or to question the divinity of her scriptures. Where are the criticisms of Celsus, of Porphyry, and of other opponents of early Christianity? Not a line of them remains except quotations, and those perhaps garbled, in the surviving answers of orthodox scribes. And how long has the Bible, in modern times, been the object of legal criticism? Why it is not so now. The prison still confronts those who treat it with "scorn." Nay, it is only fifty years ago since Richard Carlile, and other noble champions of a free press, were sentenced to frightful terms of imprisonment for publishing Paine's *Age of Reason*. And only a little more than fifty years earlier Voltaire wrote with the halter round his neck, the faggots at his feet, and the murderous eyes of hangman and priest on either side. For the devotees of a book who have drowned opposition in blood when they could not frighten it with social ostracism or terrify it with that awful form of "boycotting" known as excommunication; who still preserve on the statute book penal enactments against unbelief, and frequently show a disposition to put them in force; for these to claim that their book has withstood all assaults, has "challenged the reverence of the highest and the scorn of the proudest," is either consummate impudence or consummate hypocrisy.

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THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL:

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

THE EDITOR wishes to thank all those who have written sending him birthday greetings. But he sincerely hopes that some of the wishes expressed for an inordinately long life will not be realized. Life should cease when health no longer obtains and enjoyable work is no longer possible.

C. E. ACKLAND (Leyton).—The member of the Leyton Council who asked for the support of the Church, religion, or "even common sense," had a faculty for keeping distinct things separate of which he was probably not aware.

H. MAUDESLEY.—There is no law against it, but no judge is really justified in intruding his own religious opinions into the case before him. But good taste and an all-round sense of justice seldom go with strong religious convictions. If a Freethinking judge took a trial as an occasion for drastic comments on religion there would be an outcry at once.

C. HARPUR.—Next week.

Mr. G. BURGESS (Stockport) would like to see Mr. J. V. Shortt, of Liverpool, more frequently lecturing in different parts of Cheshire and Lancashire. So should we.

T. RAWLE.—Bradley's *Appearance and Reality* is a very acute piece of work, but some little acquaintance with the general subject, particularly in its historic aspects, is desirable before reading it.

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

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

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

Sugar Plums

We trust that our friends are not forgetting that Bradlaugh Sunday falls this year on September 23. An endeavour is being made to celebrate the day in a suitable manner, and we hope it will have the co-operation of all who can possibly take part. A train will leave Waterloo at 2.25, reaching Brookwood Necropolis at 3.33. A gathering round Bradlaugh's grave will be held, and a brief address on "Freedom" will be given by Mr. Cohen with speeches from Mr. J. P. Gilmour and probably others. There will be a tea provided for the party at 5.0. The return fare will be 3s. 9d., tea 1s. 6d. For those who feel able to do an eight-mile walk, there will be a train leaving Waterloo at 9.55, and Mr. Arthur Bonner and Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner have arranged to meet the travellers at Waterloo, travel to Bysfleet, and then conduct the "Hikers" across country. But to insure the success of the day two things are essential. As many as possible should attend, and they should signify their intention as early as possible to Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner, 38 Cursitor Street, E.C.4.

It is reported that the Government may prohibit the Fascist gathering, which is announced for Hyde Park to-day (September 9). We are writing this on September 4, the day we go to press, so are unable to deal with more than a rumour. But we hope that the Government will do no such thing, although we should not be sur-

prised if the report turns out to be true. The alleged ground is that the anti-Fascists have announced a counter demonstration and the police fear trouble. It seems to us that in that case there is a very simple method of dealing with the situation. This is either to prohibit more than one demonstration in the park on the same day, or if more than one is permitted, to see that sufficient force is there to preserve the peace, and to see that the demonstrations are held at sufficient distance from one another to prevent trouble easily occurring. This can be done, if the authorities are in earnest over the matter; and the right of public meeting is too valuable to be left at the mercy of a band of bullies, whatever their political complexion may be.

But if the meeting is prohibited we shall be inclined to look a little further than the fear of trouble from rival demonstrations. It is well-known that the powers that be are inclined to curtail the right of public meeting in the parks, and in other open spaces, if it can be done. And if it is, it will be done under regard for public order. This is the time-honoured excuse, and it has been worked before to-day. The row at Olympia furnishes the Government with a pretext, and, again, if the meeting is prohibited on this occasion, it may well be that others may be prohibited afterwards. Also it would be idle to believe that this holding of a public meeting by gracious permission of Government, will extend to ordinary meetings. Those who disturb public meetings, whether Communist, Fascist, or others, are playing with dangerous weapons; worst of all they are playing directly into the hands of those whose chief aim is to prevent a mode of public protest and propaganda that should be guarded as one of the safeguards to freedom that are still left us. In this case it is particularly stupid. The conduct of the German Branch of the Fascist movement has created enough disgust all over the world to rob it of much of the limited vogue it had. The Government should beware lest it gives it a new lease of life.

The policy of the West Ham Branch N.S.S. in introducing a social side to its work is a very good one. Instead of the usual lecture last Sunday a most enjoyable ramble through the country and forest was planned, and those who took part report a happy time. Should any of the party not already members of the Society, wish to correct that omission, full particulars can be obtained from the Branch Secretary, Mr. F. G. Warner, 83a Dawlish Road, Leyton, London, E.10.

The *Church Times* devoted a long leader the other week to the B.B.C. religious services. It records with joy, that "the broadcast service presents the Church with a very powerful weapon for the defence and propagation of the Faith." The B.B.C. has enabled Church services "to be brought to the sick room." This is "pure gain" for religion. Also, those numerous citizens, who believe thoroughly in religion, but who never go to church, "are rediscovering the Church." They find the service not a bore, and what the parsons say not "all bunk and balderdash." So they are sure to go to church again and find the service there "even more to their taste than those broadcast."

All this is true. Every Freethinker agrees that the B.B.C. religious services, forced on to millions of people—many of them are compelled to listen or switch off their inferior low-powered sets—must make a tremendous impression and be of incalculable benefit for the propagation of Christianity. Our religious contemporary is, however, not content. It wants further sermons on "the fundamentals of the faith, on the nature of God, on the Divinity of Our Lord, on the Nativity, the Cross, the Resurrection." It wants complete directions on "the duties of religion," on how to pray and read the Bible, and in fact, much more religion broadcasted than is the case now. What a pity it is that the B.B.C. is not completely directed from Canterbury or Rome, and everything that is not religious, very carefully suppressed. We have had enough, however, to put Freethinkers on their guard. More than ever is necessary our fight against superstition, idolatry and intolerance.

Christianity and Slavery

If the buying, selling, and holding of a slave for the sake of gain, is, as you say, a heinous sin and scandal, then verily three-fourths of all Episcopalians, Methodists, Baptists and Presbyterians, in the eleven states of the Union, are of the Devil.

(*The Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Harriet Beecher Stowe, p. 392.)

THESE are the words of a Christian gentleman of the slave-owning Southern States reproving the Chilli-cothe Presbytery, Ohio, in 1835, who had ventured to put the view that slavery was sinful. If he had embraced the whole of Christendom in his statement it would still have been substantially true. For Catholic as well as Protestant countries:—

. . . entered into slave-trade competition as much as others did; and it was not Catholics who took the lead in abolishing the trade. . . . I do not know that Catholics anywhere denounced, collectively, that the system as such was sinful.

(*Fr. C. C. Martindale, S.J.*)

One of the most brutal crimes that one set of human beings could perpetrate against another was thus sanctioned with great profit by a Christian world. To-day the Christian forces are united in praising and giving thanks to their Almighty God for delivering the Christian world of this blot upon its honour. They have, however, little reason to congratulate themselves upon the abolition of slavery in British possessions a hundred years ago, when to-day there are still 3,000,000 slaves in the world—most of whom are to be found in Abyssinia and the Christian Republic of Liberia—not to mention the millions whose condition of life is not far removed from the condition of slaves. Do the Christian Churches really think that their atrocities committed in the past in the self-same Almighty's name and upon the same scriptural authority of the present-day Bible are to be so easily wiped out? The stain is too deep and red, and comparatively recent for Freethinkers to allow that. It is not our intention to recall in detail the barbarous treatment dealt to slaves driven from their African homes to the wretchedness of the Barracoons. We will not tell of the horrors of the "Middle Passage," where so many were murdered on board the ships of the Christian slave traffickers, nor speak of the profits which the Churches and religious societies made from the direct ownership and maltreatment of slaves. We accept these excesses as historic examples of the cupidity and malevolent influence of the Christian institutions, whose claim to lead society is based on their assumption that in questions of morality they can do no wrong however base their actions may appear. It is more important for us to concern ourselves with pointing out how the barbarities of Christians in a past age are reflected in the conduct of present-day society; to show that in essentials the Christian position is still strong enough to bring the same kind of grossness into the relationships of men.

The Churches had always had it in their power to interpret the Gospels to condemn slavery. They had also established a sufficiently strong hold upon the minds of the people under their influence, so as to compel a modification at least of the worst of the slave dealers' excesses. Therefore the Christian religion does not stand in a very good light when spoken of as a "guide to morality." Think of it. Here is an institution, responsible in its time for educating people to recognize moral values, taking no action to prevent the brutal ill-treatment of men of a different colour at the hands of its followers. What a testimony also, to its qualifications for teaching morality when, in the ab-

sence of instructions not to traffic in slaves, its followers revert to the level of beasts in profiting from the traffic in human flesh.

The Christians of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries uprooted the Africans from their native soil; destroyed their family ties; drove them by forced marches a thousand and more miles to the coast; transhipped them to the West Indies and America under vile conditions; and there subjected them to mutilation and boiling in sugar; burning and whipping and starving them to death when they become either too old or too tired for further work.

In allowing the belief to grow up, that the white men were God's elect, and that black men were the accursed descendants of Ham, to be treated in the way described in accordance with Holy Scriptures, the Christian Churches are to-day faced with the results of their criminal negligence if they only had the honesty to face up to them. The belief that white men are superior to coloured men, even when they have had an equal cultural development, is still implicitly held by the vast number of Christian whites. This belief is responsible to a large extent for the present-day repression of the Africans, for the colour bar in America, for the shameful treatment of the Indian people at the hands of the British. Where representatives of the white races would hesitate to repress men and women of their own colour with quite the same naked brutality, they have no compunction when it comes to the question of repressing those whom they regard as inferior beings of the same order as cattle.

Having failed to give a lead to the Christian world, which might have prohibited slave-trading, there was still no need for the Christian Churches to bless its atrocities and take a part in them. But considered as a business proposition, their conduct is more easily understood. The hierarchies could not be certain that after providing their type of dogmatic education the low mentality of their followers would obey a ban on a lucrative traffic like the slave trade. In the conflict between religion and economic advantages, the Churches perhaps feared that they would lose many of their followers. For example, among the early colonists of the Carolinas were the Moravians and Salzburgers, who were opposed to slavery on religious grounds. These people withstood for some time the temptation to employ Negro slaves. At length, however, they received a message from the head of the Church in Europe, to the effect that if they took slaves with the purpose of receiving them into the Church and leading them to Christ, not only was this not a sin, but it might prove a blessing. Once the Christian Churches had sanctioned slave-holding and begetting in this way, they doubtless felt that they were as free as any other merchant to engage in the most profitable trading of their day.

We have pointed out that the withholding of any condemnation of slavery on the part of the Christian Churches resulted in unlicensed brutality in the treatment of slaves at the hands of their Christian masters. Why was that? It was probably because the Christian masters never looked upon their conduct objectively on account of their Christian upbringing. They had been taught to believe in a God whose existence could not be proved, which was in effect teaching them to base their moral judgments on lies. They learned their scriptures and found a justification for every act, moral and immoral, according to their subjective definition, and the moral judgment rarely had an adverse effect upon their pockets and their social position.

It is difficult to find in the history of the Churches a decision that ran counter to the interests of their controllers. It is not difficult, however, to find

decisions and views which favoured the desires of those on whom the Churches were dependent for their privileges and financial support.

Thus we find a man like Bishop Meade preaching to the slaves that "Almighty God hath been pleased to make you slaves here." "It is not the men who have brought you to it, but it is the will of God." Therefore he urges the slaves that they should not "fret or murmur," which would "greatly offend Almighty God," but that they should endure all, even physical ill-treatment, without complaint:—

Now, when correction is given you . . . whether you deserve it or not, it is your duty, and Almighty God requires, that you bear it patiently.

An example of "correction" was given by Dr. Howe, who described what he saw in the calaboose. (This was declared to be a common scene, for masters had the right to have their slaves flogged at any time by the common executioner if they paid the fee, without proving, or even alleging, any offence on the part of the slaves.)

There lay a black girl flat upon her face, on a board, her two thumbs tied, and fastened to one end, her feet tied and drawn tightly to the other end, while a strap passed over the small of her back, and, fastened around the board, compressed her closely to it. Below the strap she was entirely naked. By her side, and six feet off, stood a huge negro, with a long whip, which he applied with dreadful power and wonderful precision. Every stroke brought away a strip of skin, which clung to the lash, or fell quivering on the pavement, while the blood followed after it. The poor creature writhed and shrieked, and, in a voice which showed alike her fear of death and her dreadful agony, screamed to her master who stood at her head, "Oh, spare my life! don't cut my soul out!" But still fell the horrid lash; till strip after strip peeled off from the skin; gash after gash was cut in her quivering flesh, until it became a livid and bloody mass of raw and quivering muscle.

The last charge, which the victims of the slave-trade can bring against Christianity, and which the latter cannot refute, is that not only did it sanction and take part in the enslavement of their bodies, but that it also sought by all means to enslave their minds in order to make them endure willingly the injustice and barbarity of slavery. In Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* (pp. 485 ff.) is to be found a catechism describing the glories of Heaven and the torments of Hell. This was burnt into the imagination of the slaves by constant repetition. After this preparation, their minds were ready for further "spiritual food" which was served to them as follows:—

You are to be faithful and honest to your masters and mistresses, nor purloining or wasting their goods or substance. . . . Do not your masters, under God, provide for you? And how shall they be able to do this, to feed and to clothe you, unless you take honest care of everything that belongs to them? Remember that God requires this of you; and, if you are not afraid of suffering for it here, you cannot escape the vengeance of Almighty God, who will judge between you and your masters, and make you pay severely in the next world for all the injustice you do them here. And though you could manage so cunningly as to escape the eyes and hands of man, yet think what a dreadful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God, who is able to cast both soul and body into Hell!

There may be differences of opinion as to the treatment of coloured people by the whites who still dominate them. One thing is certain. It is that the Christian dogmas which provided the "moral justi-

fication" for slavery are still being propagated, and are still being used to justify oppression and its patient endurance by the oppressed. Whilst these superstitions are allowed to determine the moral outlook of nations we can be equally sure that repression and slavery of the body and mind, whether imposed by whips or not, will be licensed and sanctioned by the perverting influence of Christianity.

G. F. GREEN.

Dialectical Materialism

IV.—SOME CRITICISMS.

It would be unfair to pass any unfavourable comment on Marxism-Leninism (i.e., Dialectical Materialism with its practical consequence, revolutionary Socialism, resulting in Communism) without also noting its merits. The theory is concerned with presenting a philosophic framework freed from the interventions of Deity or any other extra-natural agent; it asserts the unity of existence. It sees in history the causal sequence which is common to all branches of science. It regards mind as a property of the activity of highly organized matter, viz., the brain. It negates the idealist conception of a thought-ejected universe; the matter of the external world is not existentially dependent on mind. It aims at embracing sociology and political development in the category of scientific predictability. It desires to abolish social-economic conditions under which wealth is so unevenly distributed as to manifest the ridiculous anomalies evident in most non-Communist countries. And above all, as a piece of empirical demonstration of what the theory is worth, it points to Soviet Russia, to the astounding contrast between Soviet Russia and Tsarist Russia.

For the question is not, how does Russia compare with England? But, how does Soviet Russia compare with Tsarist Russia? The reports of paid journalists who visit Russia are worthless beside reports from those in a position to compare the country with what it was under the Tsars. Nor is it relevant to tell the Anglo-Soviet here to go and live in Russia. He might throw back the Biblical words, "I come not to call the righteous but the sinners to repentance," i.e., I can work better for the conversion of England by staying in England. Then again, it is a question of divorcing a man from his environment. As a Test Match enthusiast, I prefer to stay in this country.

That the British press has not given Russia fair play seems certain, even if we did not know the character of the British press. I note a review in the *Literary Guide* dealing with Dr. Hecker's new book on *Russian Psychology*, in which a religionist author wants to know whether the non-Communist world can meet the challenge of Soviet progress in science and industry.

* * *

The first criticism I have to make of Dialectical Materialism is with regard to its polemic against mechanistic materialism. Those who come under the ban are such as Prof. Hogben, Prof. T. H. Morgan, the Behaviourists, Bertrand Russell (a non-Behaviourist) and J. McCabe. Let us take four instances of this polemic and start with the great Lenin himself.

Engels,¹ he says, "with Diderot, opposed the 'vulgar' Materialists Moleschott, Vogt, and Büchner,² because they assumed that thought is

¹ "Mechanism as applied to life is a helpless category" (Engels.)

² He and Moleschott never specifically accepted the term "Materialism," probably because they thought Materialism posited matter as inert.

secreted by the brain as bile is secreted by the liver" (Works, Vol. XIII p. 28 English edition). Now as a matter of fact Cabanis was the supposed author of the bile and liver theory. And the joke of the situation is that he never said it! What he said was, "We must regard the brain as a special organ specially designed to produce thought, just as the stomach and intestines are destined to effect digestion." That is, he compares function with function, not function with fluid.

The next example is from Adoratsky's *Dialectical Materialism* (July, 1934). "According to the mechanist conception," he tells us, "the explanation of all phenomena must be sought in the mechanical motion of qualitatively identical and unchanging units (atoms, electrons). All qualitative differences between things are due to the difference in their simple mechanical motion (transplacement in space). Hence quality does not exist in actual reality, but depends entirely on our subjective perceptions. Objectively there exists only the mechanical motion of atoms and their quantitative relations." Thinking, e.g., is the mechanical motion of atoms, making mind and matter identical.

In brief, *Dialectical Materialism* acknowledges the objective existence of qualities as specific forms, while mechanistic materialism allegedly denies this.

To show that this allegation is incorrect, let us take one mechanist and see whether he upholds the view put into his mouth by his Dialectic opponent. "The modern mechanist," says Prof. L. Hogben, "does not say that thought and love and heroism do not exist. He says, show me behaviour to which you apply the adjectives thoughtful or loving or heroic, and we will, one fine day, endeavour to arrive at predictable conclusions with reference to it by following the only method we have learned by experience to trust" (*Nature of Living Matter*). In brief, the mechanist is concerned with analysing phenomena, not with denying their existence.

Another example from Adoratsky. "Mechanistic Materialism," he asserts, "cannot resist the idealistic belief in a creator, for it cannot explain what it is that sets in motion the gigantic mechanism that the world appears to be." In reply, we can safely challenge any Dialectical Materialist to name one mechanistic materialist who regards the universe as having to be set in motion; that is, any mechanist who regards matter as being composed of dead blocks. On the contrary, the electrical constitution of matter provides inherent activity, and abolishes any need for a Mover.

Finally, in *Dialectical Materialism and Communism*, L. Rudas criticizes Hogben's prediction that "the methods of physics will one day claim the whole field of knowledge." What nonsense! say the Dialectics, Psychology is not a physical science!

In reply, we need only refer to Hogben's words—"the methods of physics," not physics. An explanation of the methods of physics will be found in Prof. Andrade's *Mechanism of Nature*. But L. Rudas clearly betrays his own case when he writes, "The laws of movement of society [social dialectics] are in essence identical with the natural laws of movement, for society is a product of nature. They are totally different from them in expression." How, then, can he object to Hogben's assertion that the methods of physics will become universal?

* * *

Another criticism, in a different field, concerns the social dialectic. Why should a proletarian dictatorship have to be the next stage in social development?

Let us grant the theoretical foundation to be true. Let us assume "unity of opposites" to be something more than an empty phrase. Let us allow the theory of leaps in human history. Let us accept the necessity of an anti-capitalist revolution. Let us suppose, with Lenin, that a social form must develop, "not into any random other, but into its other." Let us postulate all these things as true, and even then we ask, why is a proletarian dictatorship the necessary successor to the present régime? Does Capitalism hit no other body?

Here is a different picture. Capitalism makes scientific research subservient to its own welfare. It accepts and misuses its inventions. It chokes, if it will, its investigations, and keeps its laboratories ill-nourished. It repels the goodwill of men of science by its treatment of the workers. Thus alienated, a group of scientists, having evolved potent means of destruction, confiscate their power, their weapons and their knowledge, and in silent revolution take over the means of production, relegate the capitalist bourgeoisie to the level of wage-earners, and conduct the task of state product and distribution as an efficient oligarchy, with at least as much success as a proletarian revolution.³ Nor would dialectical development cease, and the next stage might be a trained proletariat ready to assume government.

* * *

As a concluding criticism, Dialectical Materialists show a lamentable ignorance of the function of metaphysics, which they reject, as against mechanistic materialism, which accepts metaphysics. The truth is, that science has annexed the provinces of ethics, æsthetics and philosophy (the core of which is metaphysics). Now, when science eliminates metaphysical and religious conceptions, materialists hail it with approval. But when science points to a metaphysics based on science certain materialists become suddenly blind. They have a fixed idea that no good can come of the metaphysical inquiry. What are the facts? Simply that *transcendental* metaphysics is discredited, and that monistic, foundational metaphysics is a working postulate in a materialist theory of existence. The plea of G. H. Lewes was for a scientific metaphysics, and he coined "metempirics."

Metaphysics inquires what is the character of that which exists *per se*, that of which a general conception can be formed independently of any antecedent conception? The old Idealists said it was mind, Hegel taught that everything sprung from the Absolute, and so on. Now it is the peculiar habit of those who verbally reject metaphysics to make metaphysical pronouncements.⁴ Dialectic materialists are no exception. *Dialectical Materialism* "regards matter as the basis of everything," writes Adoratsky. "Matter is primary and fundamental." "The world is unitary, and its unity lies in its materialness." Matter is "the base of phenomena," etc. "The base of phenomena" indeed! Verily, we are in the land of metaphysics. And as a Materialist I would add that this substance, or basis, or raw material, to judge from its behaviour, even when it

³ "Science has proved so versatile and profitable an instrument for exploring truth that a body of men of the highest ability, imbued with its spirit, must be employed upon the mighty problems of our time. In many countries, with very different political complexions, the new arrangement has begun in a very modest form." (McCabe, *Riddle of the Universe to-day*).

⁴ "The materialist generally does not recognize the metaphysical character of his own pronouncements." (Külpe, *Introd. to Philosophy*.)

⁵ i.e., noumenon.

creates poets, is monistic (not acted on), and non-intelligent, and therefore indifferent to the welfare of its offspring.⁶

G. H. TAYLOR.

⁶ This is even irrespective of whether or no it is indefinitely capable of analysis: etymologically, it is not.

American Notes

UNTIL May, 1934, the writer of this article was never on such good terms with ministers that they would invite him to participate in their functions as one of them. As proof that the world is advancing, this year they did so. The eighty-second Annual Conference of the Western Unitarian Churches was the occasion. It was held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. We were invited to attend both the meetings and the ministers' luncheon, where we were introduced to the fifty or more ministers present by the Rev. Dr. Loring, minister of the Milwaukee Church. In the past, while my Unitarian friends always treated me with respect, they acted as though they were afraid of me. Now they are cordial. The Western Unitarians are Radicals. Most of the ministers present were young men. I did not hear a prayer or see a clerical uniform. The majority of them would not object to the Atheist position, though they would not care to march under the Atheist banner, while the Rationalist position meets the approval of all. After hearing an address by Dr. Robert M. Hutcheon, formerly the minister of the Toronto, Canada Church, but now President of the Meadville Theological School, whom I had met many times before, the Doctor asked me, "Steiner, did you see anything irrational in my speech?" I told him I did not. The Conference passed resolutions favouring dissemination of birth-control knowledge, and outlawing war. Their treasurer announced that contributions for the past year were 20 per cent more than they were in 1933. I wish I could say the same for those of Freethought. At the luncheon, we not only had good things to eat but some of the drink that has made Milwaukee famous the world over. This would have brought horror and dismay to a gathering of Methodist ministers.

While knowledge goes forward, intolerance still stalks abroad. Its mean visage is to be seen in all parts of the world. Wherever we turn our attention, to England, Germany, Austria, Italy, South Africa, India, and Canada, and in a no less degree right here in the United States, it threatens and storms, ready to strike when an opportunity presents itself. The most serious thing is that the forces of liberty, unlike in the past, are afraid to oppose it which makes it bolder. This, in spite of the fact that its minions are the greatest cowards in the world when they are certain they will have a fight on their hands. In England it manifested itself in opposition to the repeal of the blasphemy laws, and a refusal to consent to sensible divorce laws. In Germany it is Hitlerism; in Italy, Mussolini; in Canada, South Africa and India, blasphemy. The newspapers have just announced the death of Dollfus in Austria. He it was who has forced the Catholic Church on that country as the State religion. Austria at one time had separation of Church and State, another case of a religious reaction, which John M. Robertson said will occur in any country where Freethought is neglected for even ten years. In America we have two strong foes to contend with, the Catholic Church, with its allied lay societies, and the Protestant Church, maintaining the methods of the Ku Klux Klan. For the benefit of my English friends, who may not be familiar with American history, I will say I do not refer to the same Ku Klux Klan that existed in the days following the Civil War. The purpose of the latter was to rid the South of the rule of ignorant negroes and disreputable whites. The former is a religio-political organization to fight not only negroes, but Jews, Catholics and Freethinkers. Its platform asserts that only white, native born Protestant Christians shall hold office, or teach school, or be in any position of honour or trust. As an organization it is pretty well

played out, though fifteen years ago it captured large sections of the country. Its *spirit* still lives, and we see it in church and ministers' meetings, in the church social and oyster-supper, and other church activities.

The Catholic Church has always contended that it should receive a share of the public school fund for its parochial schools, and there are always pliant politicians who will help them to get it. In a few places they have succeeded. Last winter they made two attempts to secure them in the state of Ohio. Their plans were specious enough—that they would have to close some of their schools if they did not receive public money; and that in building their own schools they were saving money to the State. Catholic children are entitled to attend the public schools the same as are other children. The Catholic assertion that in building their own schools and providing their own teachers they lift a burden from the State is untenable. If all of the Catholic children in the United States attended the public schools, they would not only receive a better education, but the additional expense to the State would be trifling, and in many localities almost nothing. Catholics fail to see that it is themselves who are robbed by the Church, which forbids them to educate their children free of charge, and compels them to build special schools, where the superstitions of their Church can be taught without restraint.

Romanists, having given their support to the Democratic Party in 1932, now plan to have the United States send a representative to the Vatican. They have succeeded in having an Irish Catholic, Farley, appointed Postmaster-General, a plum they have long sought for. The P.M.G. arbitrarily holds power over newspapers, particularly the anti-clerical press. They failed in their attempts to have the school fund divided in Ohio, and they will also fail to have the Pope recognized. The Democratic Party had better remember 1928, when its candidate for President, Alfred E. Smith, was completely snowed under, and five States lost to the party that had not been carried by the Republicans since the days following the Civil War. Smith was an open advocate of the division of the public school fund. Let the Party and the Church

"Beware the pine tree's withered branch,
Beware the awful avalanche."

The Catholic Church controls our large cities. Protestant bigotry holds sway in the small towns and rural districts. This is manifested in its universal efforts to control the public schools and dictate who shall teach therein. In most of these places a candidate for a teachership must run the church gauntlet, and answer the question, "To what Church do you belong?" or as it is sometimes asked, "What is your Church preference?" The reason for this is that the predominating Church wants teachers of its own communion to work with the preachers in making proselytes of the students. The Wisconsin State Teachers' College placed this question on the cards of its graduating students, and in some places candidates who were not members of a Church was denied positions. I protested against this to the President of the College, who admitted that it did at times work an injustice. Two years ago a hue and cry was started in the political arena against the Wisconsin State University, well known for its liberality of teaching. A little blackguard and country editor, John B. Chapple, was the Republican candidate for the United States Senate. He went throughout the State declaiming against the University as "Atheistic," "Communist," and particularly against Prof. Otto, against whom religionists held for special vengeance. A Presbyterian priest in Milwaukee, Howard Agnew Johnston, joined in the cry, Chapple gathered unto himself the remnants of the Ku Klux Klan, the Anti-Saloon League, an organization for political graft, the W.C.T.U., and other forces of bigotry and intolerance and fanaticism. It was a veritable "abode of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." But the people of the State obeyed the injunction which follows, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues," for Chapple and his crowd were buried out of sight by a cyclone of ballots.

Then the legislature of Wisconsin passed a law making it a criminal offence, punishable by fine and imprisonment, for any school board to ask any candidate for a teacher's position, what Church he belongs to, or even mention the subject of religion. Some of the old American spirit is yet left.

FRANKLIN STEINER,

Secretary American Rationalist Association.
Chicago, Illinois.

Fables for Freethinkers

III.—THE ANGLER AND THE FISH

AN angler, who was fishing one Sunday afternoon, caught a fish. As he was removing the hook from the mouth of the fish, he was surprised to hear the fish speaking to him.

"I suppose you know," said the fish, "that in Heaven fish use humans for bait?"

"Really," said the angler, who was a man interested in theology, "and how do you know that?"

"Why," said the fish, "do you not know that the great Godfish who made the world declared, in His Holy Book, that those fish who endured the manifold injustices of this life should get their reward after death?"

"I cannot say that I had heard of it," said the angler.

"Oh yes," said the fish, "and in Heaven there will be no place for human beings. The evil of this world (and I am sure you will agree that human beings are evils) is only put into it so that the fish may have the choice of good and bad. Otherwise, how could character be formed?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," said the angler.

"And in Heaven there will be no land, save only an occasional swamp for those fish who like to see things—more than can be seen beneath the water," said the fish.

"Did you say that the great Godfish put evil things into the world so that fish might form their characters?" said the angler.

"Yes," said the fish, "that is so."

"Well," said the angler, "why did not the great Godfish form the fish with perfect characters at the beginning?"

"You should not question the inscrutable decrees of Providence," said the fish, "for if we questioned the decrees of the great Godfish, who can tell into what horrible positions we might be led? And now, since I have explained to you the meaning of the Universe, perhaps you would oblige me by putting me back into the water."

"My dear sir," said the angler, who was a polite man, "I do not mind people expressing their ignorance, but I have no use for fools."

And that night the angler ate the theological fish for supper.

JOHN ROWLAND.

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