

# THE FREETHINKER

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## Views and Opinions

### Science and Religion in Aberdeen

LAST week we referred very briefly to the British Association meetings at Aberdeen, but the subject deserves a little more attention than we were then able to give it. As was noted, the sermons preached on the first Sunday following the addresses delivered during the opening week, took full advantage of the occasion. The Bishop of Carlisle made what play he could on behalf of the Church of England, Father Henry Gill put in the Roman Catholic oar, and other clergymen came in as they could. Even the Salvation Army, with its customary impudence, took a hand. I use the word "impudence" advisedly, because as the plea of the Army was for science to come and help solve the problem of poverty, the speaker was trusting to her hearers not to remember the promises made by General Booth when the Darkest England scheme was launched. In consideration of a large sum of money that was generously, if foolishly, given, the Army promised by means of labour colonies, cheap lodging-houses, and free meals to wipe out that portion of the country that was described under the term of "Darkest England." But the labour colonies and their kindred labour-sheds simply employed the destitute for a bare pittance, marketing the goods afterwards and pocketing the profits. The shelters provided food and shelter for those who could pay, and gave far less value for money that did such an institution as the Rowton Houses, without any charitable donations, and where Salvation shelters were not paying they were promptly closed. It should be said that some free meals were distributed, but these were paid for by special collections. The Army started an Immigration scheme which consisted in charging the emigrants full fares, the Army taking a commission from the shipping agencies and a capitation grant from the Governments of the Colonies. Some of the fares were lent to the emigrants, not given, and with their agents dogging the emigrants in their new settlements, there were very few bad debts. After this performance it required

a certain amount of "cheek" to ask that science should come and help. But impudence is a quality that was never wanting with the Salvation Army.

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### A Scientist at Sea

On behalf of the other preachers it may be said that Sir James Jeans, the President of the Association gave them a rattling good lead—so good that they would have hardly been human had they not played up to it. Sir James has an extraordinary idea of what constitutes science. He appears to think that science—real science—can only exist inside the microscopic scale, but beyond that scale of measurement, science has to give place to some kind of "mysticism," which enables one to talk some such concentrated nonsense as the universe being the thought of some thinker. For instance, because it is suggested that our conceptions of natural workings, or of time and space, have to be revised, therefore, it is said, *real* space and time are beyond us. He says:—

Thus we find that space and time cannot be classified as realities of nature, and the generalized theory of relativity shows that the same is true of their product, the space-time continuum. This can be crumpled and twisted and warped as much as we please without becoming one whit less true to nature—which, of course, can only mean that it is not part of nature.

As is so often the case, the "of course" is dragged in to emphasize what is most decidedly not "of course." If space and time cannot be classified as realities of nature, what, in the name of all that is intelligible, are they? What is any theory of space and time but conceptions that are framed in order to build for ourselves a better understanding of what is going on around us? On Sir James Jeans' rendering I do not see how anything can be classified as realities, for our ultimate picture of the atom, or the electron, or of electro-magnetic waves, or ether, are no more than conceptions which we frame in order the better to form an idea of the mechanism of causation. In the sense of the words used by Sir James there are no realities, and there can be none in nature since our idea of nature must be made up, as a whole of the very things which Sir James says are "of course" not real. I venture to suggest that, of course, Sir James is quite wrong.

And when to this Alice in Wonderland kind of theorizing Sir James adds that "Science is not concerned with what lies beyond the gateway of science, but with what enters through the gateways of knowledge. It (science) is concerned with appearances rather than with reality," and in another part of his address he assures us "we can never know the essential nature of anything," one begins to feel that there is a great deal of unscientific science about, and that a fair display was made of it at the meetings of the

British Association for the Advancement of Science. For, so far as man is concerned the *real* things must be the things he knows. It is indeed strange if we are actually living in a universe where the only real things are those which we can never know, and can never even think about. "Real" must mean real to us, if we are to use language this side of sanity. I refrain from dealing with this further here, as it happens to be the subject I am handling in another part of the paper. But I marvel greatly at the peculiar conception Sir James has of the nature of science and the function of knowledge.

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#### Patronizing Science

As I have said, it would have been marvellous had the parsonry let slip such a glorious opportunity for advertising themselves, and to inform the world that they were the one body of men who could really bring these poor struggling scientists into touch with "Reality." The Roman Catholic preacher was amazed at "the meagreness of the knowledge of God, which men of science had been able to deduce from investigations." This was rather an incautious utterance, since it looks like lending support to the statement that science knows nothing at all about God, and really has no use for him. The sermon at what is called the official British Association religious service was preached by Sir George Adam Smith, Principal of Aberdeen University. He marvelled that religious folk should ever have attacked evolution. But it is quite common for the party in a fight who gets a good thrashing, to wonder why he ever attacked the other party. Still it is all right, for there is now in the fact of the ascent of man "every proof of a creator," and Professor J. S. Haldane says Sir George "wrote that the analysis of our experience led finally to the conclusion that the universe was a manifestation of God." Why this opinion of Professor Haldane's on a topic on which his judgment is of no greater value than that of a Salvation Army preacher is decisive, it is difficult to see; but testimonials in favour of God are hard to collect to-day, and one must make the best of what comes to hand. But between the opinion of one preacher that science finds little or nothing to encourage the belief in God, and that we must depend upon "ordinary intelligence and metaphysical evidence"—which apparently enables one to form a definite opinion on an inconceivable subject without producible evidence, and that of the Bishop of Carlisle that science finds itself supporting the idea of a personal God, there is room for a wide variation of opinion. You may take your choice, whether you pay your money or not.

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#### Is Science Bad?

There were in a number of the sermons many criticisms of science—following the line of the popular press—on the question whether science had made for greater happiness by its discoveries and inventions. The Salvation Army speaker begged scientists to come and help—the Salvation Army (?); Science, said the Bishop of Carlisle, must "abandon something of that severe spirit of isolation which keeps it aloof from moral enquiries . . . (and) remain content with the provision of antidotes to poisons it has itself created." This is a very common and a very popular line. It is taken by every slap-dash writer on the press, and by every preacher who wishes to be considered smart and up-to-date, and who is anxious to hide the fact of lack of interest in religion, by emphasizing the importance of general reform.

All this rigmarole is wrong on two grounds. First, science does not keep itself aloof from moral enquiries—if by that is meant an understanding of the

nature of morality. Science has as much to do with an understanding of the meaning of the conduct of human beings, of the motives that prompt it, and of the significance of motives and actions, as it has to do with the motions of the planets, or the theoretical movements of the hypothetical atom. And what is to be noted is the plain fact that it is science alone that has enabled man to understand the nature and significance of morality, and to give us a science of ethics, as against the mere mouthing of common moral platitudes by those exponents of religion who have denied the right of science to say anything about it.

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#### Religion the Enemy

The game that is being played is an artful but—to those who can use their eyes—a very obvious one. The past four or five generations have seen an enormous development of scientific knowledge in all directions. This development has considerably weakened the confidence of men, first, in the truth of religion and, second, in its utility. The process has gone so far that it threatens completely to destroy religious power of social control. So two methods of defence are adopted. The one is to insist that science as such cannot deal with problems of human conduct. Religion still has the supreme word in morals although science may lend a helping hand. The other plan is to saddle science with the responsibility for the use made of scientific knowledge for sheer destruction and ruthless exploitation. This last line, because it appeals to the least intelligent section of the community, has been well-worked by our "largest circulation" press. The shallowest of writers can exploit it, but only the most foolish of readers believe it.

To an assemblage of completely reasonable people it would be enough to point out that the first business of science is to marshal whatever knowledge is or can be acquired, and to frame general laws which shall accurately express the mode of operation of natural forces, whether these forces be physical, chemical, biological, psychological or social. And it has done this, so far as knowledge permits in every one of the departments named. It has shown man how to harness the forces of nature in the interests of betterment, if he will, and it cannot but leave him to reap the consequences if he will not. Withal, science is fast doing for social forces what it has done with regard to physical ones. It is science, not religion, that is teaching, so far as our present knowledge permits, what are the conditions of a healthy human society; and if we prefer to ignore these teachings and so to act as to use the powers we possess for evil instead of for good the responsibility lies with us. The terms "good" and "evil" have no meaning whatever when applied to science. It is in the abuse, not in the fact, of science that evil lies.

But it must be noted that when we reach the region of practice, particularly that part which comes under the head of morality, religion has always reserved this for its own, and has sternly warned off all who interfered with its control. And it is a society saturated with religious beliefs and religious customs, which to-day rushes to apply every scientific invention to purposes of mutual destruction or to selfish gain. A religion-soaked society can find hundreds of millions of pounds for war, and boggle at a few millions for better housing, better sanitation, and better education. It can organize to the last button for war, and leave events to the play of primitive egoistic impulses in social affairs. It is perfectly true that man does not use as wisely as he should the powers that science is placing in his hands; but a far

more important truth is that they who now try to saddle science with the abuse of knowledge and power that is going on all over the world, are those who have done the most to prevent the moral and social development of man keeping pace with his intellectual acquisitions. I believe that science can help and should help, but its aid must come as the help of the sanitary authority comes to a community stricken with an infective disease. It should openly and consciously help to get rid of religion, not engage in the costly pastime of providing apologies for its continued existence.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## A Peripatetic Pagan

"I claim no place in the world of letters; I am, and will be, alone, as long as I live and after."—*Landor.*

"The kind wise words that fall from years that fall—  
Hope thou not much, and fear thou not at all."

*Swinburne.*

It was one of life's little ironies which imposed on so gallant a Pagan as George Borrow the function of a colporteur of the British and Foreign Bible Society. The story of Borrow's introduction to the oily officials of the Society is very characteristic of this truly remarkable man. Hearing of the possibility of work for the Society, young Borrow tramped from Norwich to London, walking one hundred and twelve miles in twenty-seven hours, and spending but sixpence on the journey. On arrival he told the surprised secretary that he could translate Manchu, and this was his first work for the Society.

Borrow went to Russia in the bad old Czarist days, and, facing great difficulties, translated the New Testament into the Manchu-Tartar dialect. Ever a man of resource, there was nothing he was not ready to do, even to setting up type, teaching wooden-headed compositors, buying paper, and hustling venal and leisurely Russian officials. Later he went to Spain on behalf of the Society, and the adventurous career he led in the Peninsula while hawking Bibles in this most bigoted of Christian countries forms the groundwork of *The Bible in Spain*, one of the most vivacious travel-books ever written. *Gil Blas*, "with a touch of John Bunyan," the volume has been called, wittily. For the author pays small attention to the purely evangelical business of the organization that despatched him, and he writes of thieves, murderers, gypsies, bandits, prisons, wars, and other worldly subjects, with all the abandon and gusto of Le Sage or Richard Burton. Addressed to the straight-laced and narrow-minded Victorian religious public, it was a wonderfully stimulating drink to unaccustomed palates. It was the time when strict Puritan parents forbade any secular books on Sundays, and Augustine Birrell has told us how, as an eager boy, he rejoiced in the old Pagan's writings, the innocent title of which had passed the unsuspecting critics on the hearth.

As may be imagined, readily, the correspondence between the austere Bible Society authorities and the worldly-minded George Borrow makes delicious reading. For this candid colporteur worshipped at many shrines from that of the pacifist Jesus Christ to that of the pugilist Tom Sayers. We see the old Adam peeping out in the evangelist, as Dr. Jekyll changed into Mr. Hyde; and the growing impatience and distrust of the pious Pecksniffs, who saw their employee boxing the compass, and forgetting the exceedingly narrow channel they paid him to pursue. At times, indeed, Borrow quite forgot the juggling jargon and

pious patter of Earl Street, and it all ended in his being recalled and being given no further employment.

This strange agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society commenced his literary career in London by writing the *Newgate Calendar* which bears a marked resemblance to the earlier pages of that Holy Scripture sold by the Society. Borrow was ever a fighter, even when his Flaming Tinman days were over, and his personal animosities extended from the Romish Pontiff to ordinary parsons. When a highly respectable canon of St. Paul's Cathedral ventured to criticize adversely *The Bible in Spain*, Borrow sent a very saucy note to his publishers stating that the reverend gentleman was a jackass, and that he would be far better employed in minding his own paltry business in his ugly cathedral.

Borrow had a real passion for travel and adventure, and a sincere love of language. Whilst still an articled clerk to an obscure solicitor at Norwich, he translated a volume of ballads from the Danish. Later, at St. Petersburg, he published his *Targum: Translations from Thirty Languages and Dialects*. Nor was this all; for in the course of his travels in France, Germany, Russia and Eastern Europe, he learned languages and dialects as he went. With the exceptions of Richard Burton and Lucien Bonaparte, he was, probably, one of the most enthusiastic linguists who ever lived. During a few years of travelling activity he made translations in a score of languages, and he produced a Turkish version of Bluebeard, and rendered a number of Danish, Russian, and Welsh tales into English.

For the last fifty years of his life he lived on "emotions remembered in tranquillity," passing his existence between Oulton Broad, Norfolk, and London. His world-famous books *Lavengro*, *The Romany Rye*, and *Wild Wales*, were all written amid the peaceful surroundings of the Norfolk Broads. His tranquillity was broken only by fierce paper warfare with critics, publishers, and other simple folks who aroused the old lion's wrath. Borrow was always furious at the want of public appreciation during his life; but his fame has grown steadily and surely since he died at Oulton, and the town of Norwich did well in purchasing Borrow's house as a memento of a most remarkable man, ripe scholar, and notable citizen.

Nature formed George Borrow in a moment of magnificence. Only those who have realized for themselves the inadequacy of the pen when brought into contact with the rich and tumultuous glow of real life can appreciate to the full the wonder of his achievement, the potent imagination, the keen insight, the gift of expression.

Besides all this, Borrow possessed in an extraordinary degree the sense of the significance of life itself apart from any personal liking or disliking; of the actual beauty and continuity of the great stream of human existence. A little aloof, somewhat inscrutable, he will ever remain, but magnificent because of his true greatness as a literary artist. Borrow's whole life was an example of the square peg in the round hole. A true son of Nature, he was always impatient of the narrow and petty standards of our civilization and our society, and he loved the men and women of the wayside. He recognized in these so-called vagrants the true sons and daughters of "the great mother who mixes all our bloods." At heart he was a great Pagan in a Christian community. Recall his exquisitely phrased Pagan glorification of existence: "Life is sweet, brother. There's night and day, brother, both sweet things; sun, moon, stars, brother, all sweet things; there's likewise the wind on the heath. Life is very sweet, brother; who would wish to die?" For centuries Christian priests have chanted the old,

sad, disheartening refrain of this world being but a vale of tears, but George Borrow, although surrounded by Christians, would have none of it. He listened to other and far better strains. He saw the clear blue sky, and the sun shining gloriously above it, and the shadow of the Cross seemed far away. Was he not a captious colporteur?

MIMNERMUS.

## The Progress of Unbelief

"The cry, raised on every hand, that Christianity has failed is answered by the counter-cry, "Christianity never yet has been tried!" To this a sociologist makes the retort, "If a religion which has existed for two thousand years, and has been held officially by the most powerful nations for fifteen hundred years has not been tried, it has failed."—(Prof. J. H. Leuba, *The Psychology of Religious Mysticism* (1925) p. 332.)

It is a commonplace to-day among religious people, and in the religious press—and indeed, in the popular newspaper press—that Atheism and Scepticism in religious matters is dead; that the long drawn-out warfare between religion and science is at an end, and that the victory lies with religion. For instance, Mr. Clifford Sharp, reviewing a book of essays entitled *The Great Design*, declares: "The famous Conflict between Science and Religion, in so far as it was ever real at all, was a purely Victorian affair . . . the wheel has gone full circle, and it is Science itself that is leading the Churches back to the cosmogony of Moses." (*News Chronicle*, June 19, 1934.)

That is, that science teaches the world was created in six days. That Adam, the first man, was created out of dust, and Eve out of one of Adam's ribs! The editor of the *News Chronicle* approves and supports this statement, by printing, in large type, above the review, "Scientists support Moses."

Even the elementary text-books on geology and biology give the lie to this statement. Sir James Jeans, Prof. Eddington, and Sir Oliver Lodge, who are popularly regarded as champions of religion, would all repudiate the suggestion that they believed in the fables of *Genesis*; and would regard anyone who questioned them on the subject, as little better than a fool.

Of course no one goes to religious apologists in search of truth. They seem to work under the impression that truth is a very precious thing, and should be used very sparingly, especially when dealing with the Bible. But such a reckless defiance of truth as that contained in Mr. Sharp's statement can only have been ventured upon under the knowledge that no refutation of the statement would be allowed to appear in the same paper. But similar statements, in matters of religion, appear in the *Daily Herald* and the *Daily Express*, who vie with one another in boosting religion. We firmly believe that if a new daily paper started which ignored religion altogether, it would at once attain a large circulation among the more intelligent working men, mechanics and craftsmen, who are thoroughly sick of being dosed with this religious hokum every day.

These papers do not represent the views of the advanced and better educated, and better read, working men of to-day. They may be the religious ideas of his leaders like Mr. Lansbury and Arthur Henderson, who like their former colleagues, Snowden and MacDonald, were brought up on the Bible in the Victorian age, and never departed from it. When these have gone, their religious views will go with them.

The truth is that the influence of the press, in religious matters, is of no more value than that of the

pulpit. Take for instance, the furious crusade conducted by both pulpit and press, when the Bolshevics disestablished their Church and denounced religion as the "Opium of the People." The preachers made the dust fly out of the pulpit cushions in their denunciations of the blasphemy; while the press employed every stunt known to journalism, in order to arouse the working-man to indignation at this open defiance of God.

Working men, who are ready enough to demonstrate in a matter of vital interest, or for a just cause, never made a single demonstration; and, so far as the great mass of the organized Trade Unions are concerned, we are unaware of a single protest being registered. The working man surveyed the situation with philosophic calm, and awaited developments; he had done his part in preventing our Government from sending forces to Russia to re-establish the old Tsarist tyranny, under threat of a general strike, and now they must fight it out with whatever spiritual power, or powers happened to exist. In the event, the Bolshevick rule has been firmly established, and nothing has happened. God has not seen fit to interfere in the matter at all, in spite of all the passionate appeals made to him to vindicate his power and majesty. As Thomas Carlyle lamented in his old age, "God does nothing now." The crusade against Russian Atheism has now been dropped. God has not helped in the matter at all, but has let his followers down. The only effect of the crusade has been to draw the attention of the proletariat to the fact that God may be defied with impunity, and so provides an example for them to follow when the time arrives.

Meanwhile the forces making for reason and truth proceed steadily forward unnoted, except after the lapse of years. Those who are acquainted with Prof. Leuba's work *The Psychology of Religious Mysticism*, will remember that he made a statistical investigation into the religious beliefs of American scientists, during the year 1914. The names were chosen from the *American Men of Science*, and the believers in God among Physicists amounted to 50 per cent. Among Biologists 39, Sociologists 29, and Psychologists 32 per cent.

Now if it is true, as we are continually being assured, that it is the problems of Life and Mind that require a spiritualistic explanation; then it is passing strange that the men who know most about these subjects are those who reject all belief in a God. But that is not all. Among the names in the above-named work, some have a star attached, to indicate their greater distinction in science, and upon investigating these it was found that among Physicists there were 34 believers per hundred, Biologists 17, Sociologists 19, and Psychologists 13 per hundred!

In 1933 Prof. Leuba repeated his investigation, and in an article in *Harper's Magazine* for August, he gives us the result. Among the lesser men of science, the believers in God have fallen from 50 per hundred to 43. The Biologists from 39 to 31. The Sociologists have gained one, 29 to 30, but the Psychologists have slumped from 32 to 13!

Among the greater scientists matters are worse still, the 34 believers among the Physicists in 1914, have sunk to 17 in 1933. Among Biologists from 17 to 12. Sociologists 19 to 13, and Psychologists 13 to 12.

As Prof. Leuba observes, "It is the first time that such a comparison is possible." And further:—

Now, for the first time, we are in possession of a solid, if limited, basis of information regarding the modifications in religious convictions, which have taken place in large and influential bodies of men. The importance of that knowledge will not be denied

by those who realize that the course of human events not only determines beliefs, but is also determined by them.

Prof. Leuba also investigated the belief in immortality and belief in a future existence, and found the same falling-off in both. Slowly but surely the belief in the supernatural is dying, for what the scientist thinks to-day, the people will think to-morrow.

W. MANN.

Mind ?

It is contended by one school of thought that "Mind" or the "Conscious Activity" of our being is the outward manifestation or underlying principle, and the only reality of existence. The ultimate reality behind phenomena being a spiritual, all-pervading "thought Emanation." In different departments of scientific research various authorities have pronounced as much from their particular spheres.

Jeans, in his *Mysterious Universe* writes of the "Perfect Mathematical Equation" behind phenomena. Eddington and his theological champions, have their "Realm of Values" as outside the sphere of scientific research and experimentation, but of the "Spiritual Domain"; and Oliver Lodge and his school propound—if I may be pardoned the description—"a spiritual sphere of continued existence after death, including fairies, cigars, industry and excursions into space, with a watching father over all." I cannot help musing to myself on the absurd inconsistency of it all against the background of a reasoned reflection of history from the dawn of recorded events onwards.

I am assuming that Jeans' "Mathematical Equation" is the most perfect one possible, and that Eddington and Co.'s "Realm of Values" epitomizes all that is highest and best in our conception of values such as truth, beauty, goodness, etc., and that Lodge's version implies a good and kindly Father so benevolently disposed in his ways, to his little sheep.

Contrast all this with a reflection on human history, by far the major portion of which is a record of barbarism, cruelty, wars, deception, treachery, intolerance, and selfishness. Try as I may I cannot reconcile the idea of anything pertaining to "perfection" that may be behind phenomena as being representative of, or part of, or even the expression of itself, in the urge of human consciousness, unless, of course, I view this "Perfect Mathematical Equation," etc., as an incomprehensible monster, utterly dispassionate and indifferent to our being, but that would never do.

The direction of human affairs has always been more or less in the hand of that portion of society that had access to the best and finest of education, culture, and knowledge. As a consequence their minds evolved or should have evolved, a greater sense of values nearer to perfection than obtained generally. It would thus logically follow that this "Perfect Mathematical Equation," etc., would enhance its "Mode of Operation" by emerging through the enlightened minds and refined intelligences of the initiated few, and thus affect the destiny of humanity as a whole. At least that is how I imagine the followers of the "Perfect Mathematical Equation," etc., reason out their conception.

But what do we find? Who would deny categorically that the world to-day is not pretty much of a similarity to its sad and cruel past, in that deception, intolerance and selfishness hold sway? In business, political diplomacy, government, newspapers and religion generally, deception and hypocrisy rule the roost.

I do not for one moment deny or doubt the influence or existence of honesty and goodness in human character, but in the direction of human affairs it is conspicuous only by its sad absence or at least, very rare occurrence. To postulate in face of this the twaddle of Free-will is just a pitiful begging of the question. So on contemplation I find it utterly impossible to reconcile any notion of Perfection, Sublime Thought, Heavenly Father,

etc., with the explanation of existence as we know it; and of course, outside our experience of knowing the universe, no explanation is thinkable.

I am forcibly put in mind of Omar in his lines :—

O Love! Could'st thou and I with fate conspire,  
To change this sorry scheme of things entire,  
Would we not shatter it to bits,  
And re-mould nearer the heart's desire.

J. GARRICKSON.

Acid Drops

It is little less than a libel to say that men cannot rise above the level of a narrow nationalism, and that internationalism is a mere dream. The enquiry now going on in the United States concerning the making of armaments appears to have decisively killed that superstition. For here are a few firms—the enquiry is mainly limited to the relations between English and American makers—that are so far above nationalistic feelings that they share out the world between them, impartially supply both combatants in a war, and use a very highly-placed man, a Knight Commander of the Bath as one of their principal agents. In the ardour of their impartial internationalism a gunboat belonging to the American Navy is used to demonstrate the excellence of the torpedoes and submarine supplied.

There is to be "pressure"—so it is said, placed on our own government, to institute a similar enquiry to that going on in America. But we hardly think that will be done. For we fancy it would be regarded as a slur on the British character, to think that, almost alone it is incapable of rising above that narrow nationalism which in the supply of arms would hesitate to supply weapons of destruction, whether those supplied were likely to use them against us or not. The Britisher loves fair play. And what better evidence could be given of the love of fair play that governs armament makers than to find that they are as ready to supply enemies as they are to supply friends, and to equip both sides in a quarrel to assure that the fight shall be conducted on something like equal terms. We think that when the United States Commission issues its report it should be headed, "Evidence of the Possibility of a Profitable Internationalism," or some such title.

Professor J. du Plessis, D.D., in the *Expository Times* :—

Modern Missions are now about a century and a half old. For the toil and expenditure of these hundred and fifty years there is, statistically speaking, not much to show. . . . In Japan, about one half per cent of the population has been Christianized: in China, not quite three-quarters per cent; in India a little over one per cent; in Africa about one and a half per cent.

Professor du Plessis is not quite fair to the missionary movement. After all, the services conferred on this country by missionaries are not summed up in actual conversions. There is the services missionaries perform in opening up new trade routes and paving the way to annexation. There are the many trading ventures in which Missionaries engage, and by teaching the natives how to work, they manage to make a very good profit. There is the restraining influence which missionaries exert on natives by inducing them to work in the mines, cultivate rubber forests and in various ways open up opportunities for investments for the people at home. Last, but not least, it is only the fact that the natives are given at least the opportunity of embracing Christianity that provides an ample justification for the rule over them of the European mine or estate owner. The New Testament wisely says, "What shall it profit a man though he gain the whole world and lose his own soul," and surely that may be read, it is read, as "shall it not profit a man if in losing everything worldly that is his, he yet saveth his own soul?"

According to an advance review in the *Daily Telegraph* of "The Vatican Yesterday, To-day, and To-morrow," by Mr. George Seldes, the Vatican received from Mussolini, as one of the conditions of concluding the Pact between the Government and the Pope two sums of money, which together aggregated over 29 million pounds. There were other financial arrangements for the benefit of the Papacy. But one of the conditions also was that the twenty-nine millions was to be invested in Italian Consolidated funds. This, of course, pledged the Vatican to support Mussolini—unless some other party made a better financial bargain with the Pope. We can now understand why the Vatican is ready to bless Italian Fascism, but does not find it in accord with its conscience to support Fascism in Germany.

Whatever has happened to Infidelity, and the general classification by which religionists like to include murder and suicide as part of Atheistic propaganda. Mr. Isaac Foot, M.P., writing in *Great Thoughts*, says, "there is no one habit that is responsible for so many ruined homes as—," no, not Drink or sexual license—but, just putting an occasional sixpence on a horse or dog. "Once a man becomes a victim to this habit," says the Liberal M.P., "his usefulness as a citizen is gone." Mr. Foot's intemperate vituperation weakens the force of a needed protest against a great many distractions which occupy men's minds to the exclusion of all serious study.

A charge of making false statements in a prospectus has put many, although insufficient, Directors in the Dock. What can one say about an Advertisement which reads, "You can help to restore prosperity and maintain peace"? issued by the International Bible Reading Association which teaches that Peace and Prosperity can be obtained "By advocating among all classes of people, daily Bible reading." There seems to be a sort of cynical touch in the word "advocating." Apparently preaching, not practising, is what is called for!

We hear that Dr. John Bradbury of New York has been doing duty at Spurgeon's Tabernacle, during the vacation of "the regular guy." He is described in the *Baptist Times* as "the fiery evangelist." He is said to have preached extraordinarily lengthy sermons, and, the same journal says, rather inconsequently, "Dr. Bradbury prayed that the people of England may be the people of God, as if he loved England." It looks as if the *Baptist Times* realizes that one would naturally take such a "wish" as the words of an enemy rather than a friend.

The Methodists have been celebrating the 150th anniversary of Wesley's sending out two Missionaries to America. No doubt at all, Methodism "caught on" in America, and is to-day a wealthy and influential enemy of human liberty. But there is no need to boast as one eloquent Methodist, Dr. Tipple, boasted, that "by the grace of God the American (Methodist) episcopacy is as valid as any other episcopacy." It has nothing whatever to do with "the grace of God." In the United States the episcopacy of every sect is on exactly the same level. This was demonstrated finally by a special circular issued by the Census of Religions at Washington, in regard to the Liberal Church of America, an Atheist Society which calls its lecturers "Bishops." These bishops are entitled to every privilege granted to Catholic, Episcopalian and "Liberal" bishops. This is American democracy, not the Grace of God.

The Todpiddle celebrations have been abominably exploited by the Nonconformists, whose interest in labour is notoriously a proselyting dodge. Such exploitation would matter little if it were not for the very sickening sight of "labour leaders" mixing up their functions as officials of the party with their personal petty superstitions. Lansbury, Henderson and others preaching under the auspices, and in the company of reactionaries like the Rev. Henry Carter and the Rev. A. D. Belden must stultify Labour principles amongst thoughtful people.

We always enjoy reading "Ezra's" column in the *Methodist Recorder*. He tells some good stories which must be highly welcome to the jaded readers of our all too pious contemporary. Here is one. A Minister and a probationer were saying farewell, leaving only the Superintendent to carry on. The parting minister preached from the text, "Abide ye here with the ass. I and the lad will go yonder." Another tells of two dear old ladies who had attended a certain church for many years. Once they made a presentation to the minister, saying how much they appreciated him, adding, "We are so deaf you know, we have never heard any of your sermons."

Mr. Philip Inman, managing Governor of Charing Cross Hospital, who collected over 50,000 dollars for a "Columbia Ward" in his hospital, is not overgrateful for the help he received from certain churches. As he is himself, quite a pious "bloke," his evidence is the more interesting. He went hopefully to a service in the most wealthy New York Church on Fifth Avenue, where the Rev. Dr. Jowett preached, on behalf of this good cause. "When the pastor announced the first hymn," he says, "I felt my heart sink. It was

Guide me, O thou great Jehovah  
Pilgrim through this BARREN land."

"Strangely suggestive, and sadly true," this word proved as far as *that* church was concerned.

The German papers make strange reading these days. As in Italy and elsewhere to-day, we miss the old fire, the old interest in current affairs, the discussion which aids independent thought. There is instead a heavy fear of censorship which paralyses mental speculation. Once intellectual journals now begin closely to resemble our own Sunday papers which with perhaps one or two exceptions, are about as banal as if England had never known a free intelligent press.

Westminster Chapel has enjoyed the ministrations of an American pastor, Dr. Harris Kirk, who preached his farewell sermon on the subject of "Jeremiah Speaks to Our Times." We wonder if his text was Jer. xx. 7. "O Lord Thou hast deceived me," or that madman's yarn about "the girdle" in his thirteenth chapter, or that most remarkable recommendation of war "Cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood" (Jer. xlviii. 10). It is all very well for Jeremiah to "speak to our times," but if "our times" follow this person's instructions, "our times" will all be found in jail—or Bedlam.

Advertising another volume in the series called "The Origin and Progress of the Christian Religion," it is said that "in this we get an aeroplane view of the Church." It must be a "slighty" book, with plenty of "gas," very much "in the clouds," and a most expensive amusement.

The *British Weekly* reminds us of a very funny metaphor in "Hebrews." We give the *British Weekly's* summary of it, only adding that this pious weekly sees nothing amusing in it: It is "an anchor cast within the veil," "this anchor is cast FORWARD, it has clutched at and is embedded in the unseen," and "the soul of man, anchored forward in the unseen, must be drawing itself nearer to its source." This passage ought to win a prize in the *Literary Digest's* page of "Slips that pass in the night."

Keyserling's latest book, *Problems of Personal Life*, performs the well-nigh impossible task of being no less silly than its predecessors. The author has often been described as a "witless Chesterton." Full of superstitious trivialities, calmly appropriating worn-out or exploded fallacies of more original writers, Keyserling poses as a thinker amongst superficial minds. He has the impudence to refer to "the bankruptcy of reason" as so universally acknowledged as not needing argument. "Progress," he says, "has revealed itself as a

race towards an abyss." We pity those who cannot keep their heads when superstition wins a battle here and there. We pity still more those who cannot see the difference between scientific demonstration and all kinds of blind "faith."

Dr. Kirsopp Lake puts a new construction on the passage (1 Cor. 7) round which a famous play was once written by Bjornson. It is St. Paul's instructions to Christians about marriage. As usual, if only the Bible were properly translated, how different God's (original) Holy Word would be. Verse 38, says Dr. Lake ought to read "marry" instead of "give in marriage." The effect of this amendment would be to throw the responsibility on the husband, instead of the father. We know of no translation which has ever suggested so different a proposition. Certainly Bjornson never thought of such a possibility. But even if it were so, it in no sense modifies the scandal of a wizened old bachelor, hating marriage (recommending emasculation rather than marriage) having the audacity to tell anybody in what circumstances the crime of marriage could perhaps be condoned.

Modernism has now invaded Roman Catholicism, and it is amusing to see to what shifts Catholic editors will go when trying to make the way of salvation easy for the faithful. We always believed that the sternest defender of everything in the Bible was the Roman Church, but it now looks as if this must be somewhat modified. Take the Flood for instance. It seems that after all the Church does not definitely say the account in *Genesis* is true. The idea that it is, "has long since been abandoned, and most people think now that it was a local phenomenon." This in spite of the fact that Catholics "generally accepted" the story of "Noe," and that it was accepted by Peter.

"The Church," we are told, "teaches nothing," as to when the Flood took place, but we are assured that "competent scripture scholars in the Church maintain that there is no definite basis in scripture for a chronology of the early history of mankind," and therefore no reason to accept such a date for Creation as 4004 B.C. It would be interesting to know how many "heretics" have been tortured, burnt, or imprisoned, by the Church for maintaining just such opinions? In any case, Free-thinkers get no thanks from pious people for having insisted for centuries, not only that the Flood story is absurd and impossible, but that others in the Bible are either equally silly or even more so. And Blasphemy laws are still on the statute book. It's a queer religious world.

A terrible outrage took place in Travancore. A Hindu of the Nair caste actually destroyed a life-size image of the Immaculate Conception in the Chapel of the Blessed Virgin, and what is even worse, bedaubed the altar with filth and desecrated the figure of Our Lord on a crucifix. Why the Holy Family did not rain down fire from high Heaven upon the desecrator, or at least do something to prevent the outrage, is beyond us. In fact the Hindu might just as well have destroyed a pagan idol for all the notice that was taken of the foul deed by the All-Highest. As a mark of mourning, the Council of the town suspended all business, and even hoisted black flags. But we must repeat the question, why didn't the All-Highest prevent the outrage?

Really, Professor Bethune Baker must look out. Some "common informer" might tell the authorities that the Blasphemy Laws have never been repealed, and bring the learned Professor under their ban. He has just told the Churchmen's Conference at Birmingham that "Our Gospels have some characteristics in common with works of fiction," and he did not seem very keen either about accepting the Virgin Birth or the Resurrection. This is simply awful. But if Prof. Baker cannot now accept the Resurrection, "the most wonderfully attested fact in all history," as so many Catholic converts invariably announce in proof of their absolute piety, it seems

to us he must have given up all the other miracles in the Bible. Now, where is he exactly in the Christian Church? Anywhere?

Professor Carnegie Simpson speaks with two voices. "War is an appalling crime against humanity, and an irretrievable disaster to civilization." But then again, "to many Christians," it is quite right to "resist unrighteousness by armed force in God's name." We are well aware that Prof. Simpson hates war. But he is also a Christian, and in the end falls back on "that pregnant word of the Master—seek ye first the Kingdom of God."

"The World's Greatest Prayer Meeting" is announced by its conveners, the Salvation Army. It occupied two hours in 86 countries and dominions, and as many are in foreign languages, it will probably take a year or so for God's Interpreters to sort out and place in readable order all the odds and ends of misunderstood words, inevitable in such a medley of Babelism. General Higgins, however, has done his best by offering the Almighty the plain English of what he wants the Prayer to mean. It would be awkward if God got so confused that He gave the wrong answers to the conundrums submitted to Him.

Dr. James Reid, in a recent sermon, seemed about to explain the mysteries of prayer. At last, we thought, we may learn exactly what we get when we pray. He tells us, "we come to Him in rags and shame," and "He gives us all we need." Yes, that's fine. But who is the judge of what is "all we need?" Dr. Reid takes it all back when he says, "He gives us the robe of His righteousness, and a ring which is the symbol of His love." A "symbolical" ring might mean anything; and only a Nudist could walk down the High Street wearing nothing but a "robe of righteousness." Even Ghandi would deny that a funny ring and dud robe were "all we need."

Professor Findlay gives us another "explanation." We have often been puzzled over Matthew i. 16, which traces the descent of Jesus from David, through Joseph, who was no relation to Jesus, according to the "Virgin" Mary theory. The learned and sometimes amusing Professor explains that "Jewish slanders were already circulating in the second half of the first century, based on the knowledge that Jesus had not been born in normal wedlock." He seems to suggest that, "there are serious difficulties in the way of accepting the Virgin birth," that Joseph knew all about it, and "there for the moment I must be content to leave the matter." Not a conclusive "explanation" to say the least.

The Rev. William Ross writing of a visit to Palestine feels sad at the contemplation in Rabbah Ammon of "the biggest, blackest crime with which the pages of Scripture are stained," which was committed there. He mercilessly describes David's vile atrocities (a victorious war was never ended more abominably than the story told in 2 Sam. xii. 31) and "all because the people of Ammon had played a rough practical joke on David." "Adultery, murder and torture at its cruellest," is Mr. Ross's true description of this act of "the man after God's own heart." And yet Mr. Ross thinks "The grace of God alone can keep us from falling into" such "depths of infamy." Mr. Ross is clearly relying upon a rotten reed which does not even exist.

Dr. S. Parkes Cadman, a well-known enemy of liberty in New York, says that the unhappiest moment he has ever experienced has been when his conscience has scourged him. He gives no details, and we are not at all interested. He has given many people some very unhappy moments when his conscience revelled in fiendish joy. A list of the causes, which Mr. Cadman has persecuted in America is a list of every step made there in that period towards the emancipation of man from slavery and superstition. He was, incidentally, the most

prominent recruiting sergeant for war that America produced before America came into the struggle . . . and after.

The Rev. James Moffatt, author of a Colloquial Bible, writes that he is not interested in what a modern encyclopædia can tell him about religion. Nothing has happened since "the Cross," so why worry? We quite understand Mr. Moffatt's prejudice. Religionists always prefer the darkness of mysticism ("a timeless mysticism" is the phrase he likes), rather than an exact statement of the facts. Another name for investigation is to be found out. And that is what all religions fear.

The *Christian World* notes that the rule of preachers in our Cathedrals is to limit their sermons to ten minutes duration. The *Christian World* asks: "Are these preachers afraid that if they exceeded this limit, the congregation would take flight?" Why not imitate the Mormons, who at the Salt Lake City Tabernacle close and lock the doors during the sermon. There is no escape except suicide. Last year one visitor shot himself in a church. Perhaps the sermon lasted eleven minutes.

Canon Barry, D.S.O., preaching in Westminster Abbey, admitted that "religion divorced from service to mankind was sterile." Of course he was not talking about Christianity. That is his religion. He called Hinduism all these bad names. It is only rival religions which, he says, "drift into pietism or petrify into ecclesiasticism." Christianity, of course, "does mean putting worship first, but it does not mean leaving a man to die." Most of the Christianity we have seen deserves the biting lines of A. H. Clough:—

"Thou shalt not kill, but needst not strive  
Officiously to keep alive."

Pessimism surely must be attributed to the Rev. J. Bevan, who writes that "if every business man in Liverpool believed that business success was connected with his belief in God's guidance, Liverpool would be all churches." Let us tell Mr. Bevan that however he may in his "superiority complex" sneer at what ninety-nine per cent of the priestly profession teach as God's own truth, religion has never stood the ghost of a chance of success unless it has stood in men's minds as a safe calculation of literal positive material advantage. Business men may have found out that religion is useless in mundane affairs, but if they are to be hooked on to the gospel skewer it will be now (as always) because they are calculating on a permanent "business success" after death.

The Presidential Message of the newly-elected President of the Methodist Church ought to dispose finally of the pretence that Methodism, any more than any other religion has any kind of hope for present-day social progress. Mr. Younger says plainly "the primary need of Great Britain to-day is not its education or its social progress, but its spiritual redemption." "Sin is our urgent problem."

Somebody has unearthed a full account of ancient Methodist Sunday Schools in London. The *Methodist Recorder* reveals some of the terrible Sabbatarian Rules for the poor children victimized by these sanctimonious "teachers." We freely admit that the Day Schools were as bad in their atmosphere of gloom and denial of children's happiness. But at least Sunday might have come as a weekly relief, even if "WASTED" in the freedom and fresh air of the street. Fancy, "when the (Sabbath School) children are dismissed they must go straight home, and if they are seen running or playing at any play or game they will be treated similarly" (i.e., punished). "The child will be taught nothing but what tends to remind them of the several duties they owe to God, their parents and their superiors." Good God, what a "school."

There is no subject under the sun Mr. James Douglas likes to write about as much as the Bible. He can fill columns of slush in its favour—columns, did we say? Why, there is no restraining his pen. In fact he insists, "we can find in the Bible the key to all our perplexities." Much the same kind of thing was said, we believe, by some Mohammedan about the Koran, which book was considered to be the only one necessary for mankind. Mr. Douglas despises Modernism. He wants the "people" to read and read and re-read the Bible exactly as it is. We think he will go on "wanting." The Bible as the one book for mankind is dead; and if it is ever read again in its entirety by moderns, it will be merely as a literary curiosity.

What are our national journals coming to? Here is the *Daily Mail* actually heading an article by a "Churchman," "The Handicap of Bible English!" It is enough to make not only pious believers, but "reverent Rationalists," University Professors of English and even writers of advertisements lose their temper. Here is the "well of English undefiled"; the greatest literary marvel of any age, the finest heritage of the English language we have, called a "handicap." The "Churchman" claims that one of the chief reasons why the Bible is not the people's favourite reading lies in its "archaic" language. "It is unintelligible," he declares, "to the bulk of the population as if it was in a foreign language." And he refers to modern versions as so colloquial and vulgar as to be unsuitable for use in public worship.

Now when the wicked Freethinker pointed this out—and he has done so for years—he was jeered at for his utter lack of literary appreciation and his contemptible bias; and he was even more jeered at when he pointed out that the Authorized Version was always "archaic," and was deliberately kept so because it thus surrounded itself with a holy flavour. "Churchman" must be congratulated on his bold denunciation of Bible English, even if he is following Freethinkers a long way behind; and also because he does not hesitate to declare that "some of the most familiar passages in the Bible are liable to the grossest misunderstanding," and "some of the very bitterest disputes among Christians are traceable to simple misunderstanding of what the Bible means." It is good to let even the pious readers of the *Daily Mail* know the truth sometimes.

### Fifty Years Ago

WERE the whole of the aboriginal inhabitants of India to become Christians we should express neither surprise nor sorrow, for their training has prepared them to accept the modified devil-worship which is refined a few degrees above their own. There are eighteen millions of aborigines in India. The conversion of this number would certainly sound well in Exeter Hall, since less than half a million can be boasted of at present. But their adherence to Christianity would not mean the conversion of India. On the contrary, the one hundred and forty millions of Hindus proper, and the forty millions of Mohammedans in Hindostan, only think less of Christianity for its adoption by the stupid, ignorant and superstitious hill-tribes of an alien race. Educated Hindus look on the missionaries with good-natured contempt. They know that the Hindus proper will, in the long run, follow the lead of their educated countrymen, and they are not displeased at the missionaries helping to educate the masses out of their superstitions, since they have little chance of superseding them with their own. They know something of the blood-stained history of Christianity, and show no disposition to accept that pernicious superstition. We firmly believe they never will. There is something better in store for them. They reject Christianity because they are above it. They look for salvation to no faith, but to Science, which Christianity endeavoured to strangle.

*The "Freethinker," September 21, 1884.*



# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL :

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## TO CORRESPONDENTS

- C. OAKES.—Thanks for cuttings. The apologies of the parsons for non-attendance, or decreased attendance at Church are so many attempts to cover up the real fact that less interest is taken in religion than used to be the case. We have no doubt that more people would attend Church if the services were made more interesting, but they would attend any entertainment for the same reason.
- S. NEWTON.—You will find the passages you require in *Colonel Bob Ingersoll*, by Cameron Rogers, published Doubleday & Co., New York, pp. 184-90. We hope to issue more pamphlets shortly.
- J. HUTCHISON.—The meaning of the proverb is not that an exception establishes the truth or soundness of a rule, although it is often read that way. It means that an exception *tests* a rule, and if the exception is established the rule is proven to be unsound.
- T. MOSLEY.—Mr. Cohen has no time at present to consider the writing of a primer of philosophy, although something of that kind on genuine scientific writings is very badly needed. For the present the series of articles he has been writing may serve as hints to some as to the line on which a sane and understandable philosophy might run. Pleased to know you appreciate the articles so highly.
- A. FORBES.—We are glad to learn that there are many demands in Stockton Public Library for the *Freethinker*. We already supply a number of libraries free, and have no objection to adding more to the list. Pleased also to hear of the successful meetings in Middlesborough. The whole of this North-Eastern district is a good field for work.
- S. HOUSTON.—The "Holism" of General Smuts is a form of the theory of "Emergence," and "Emergence" rightly understood is no more than the statement that in every product there is something that is not evident in the factors considered separately, and which, therefore no previous knowledge of the qualities of the factors would enable us to predict. It is a completely scientific position, although, as usual, an attempt is made to give it a religious significance. But that also is done with evolution as a whole.
- H. MEREHAM.—The best edition of Berkeley's works is the one in four volumes, edited by Fraser. We believe there is a cheap edition of some of the writings in Dent's *Everyman's Library*. But do read Berkeley for yourself, not merely what others have said about him. He is so beautifully clear that only sheer prejudice or ignorance can lead to a misunderstanding. The statement that Berkeley denied the existence of a world external to the observer is gross misunderstanding. Berkeley's whole aim is defeated if this is not established, and Hume's Freethinking attack on Berkeley's "Divine mind" loses its force if Berkeley's analysis of the nature of knowledge is rejected.

FOR distributing the *Freethinker*, D. Fisher, 2s. 9d.

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

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

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

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

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

## Sugar Plums

There will be just time to remind London readers that the Commemorative gathering at the Bradlaugh Monument at Brookwood is to-day (September 23). The train leaves Waterloo at 2.25 p.m. Full details on back page of this issue.

One of the essentials for a paper that is intended to be read is that it should be readable—and for as large a number as is possible. To effect this latter end its contents should be varied—always avoiding the aim of the "national" press of writing as though its readers were mainly Morons. Further, varied writing means varied writers, for no matter how brilliant a particular writer may be, there are certain to be a number who, to the condemnation of their own taste, prefer someone else. Unrelieved profundity lends a temporary value to stupidity, and a writer who always sparkles makes interesting the platitudinous dullness of a James Douglas. As that profound social philosopher, W. S. Gilbert, remarked, an over profusion of "silk and satin rare" tends to increase the attractiveness of shoddy.

For the past three weeks Mr. Cohen has been writing on one of the oldest and—owing to the mistake of taking obscurity to indicate profundity—one of the knottiest of philosophical problems. The subject is of great importance at present owing to the efforts of some of the best known scientists to mix this question up with the belief in God, and so perpetuate a blunder by marrying it to an absurdity. But the number of people who are either interested in such a topic, or who have the quality of mind which will enable them to wade through a long argument of this kind are in the minority. We know, and are gratified in the knowing, that a large number of readers fully appreciate the articles that have appeared, but there must be a large number who would rather read something else—particularly when their continuation on the front page prevents the appearance of those comments on topical events, which under the caption of "Views and Opinions" have become a "feature" of the paper.

All this is prefatory to an apology for Mr. Cohen taking up more of the paper than is usual, and more than he cares to occupy. So for the next three or four weeks the "Views and Opinions" will take their usual course, while the series of articles will be continued in another part of the paper. It is not a simple task to boil down what could easily be a good sized volume to a few weekly articles, and at the same time express the arguments free from technical jargon. But we know these articles are helpful to many, and they are serving to clear away the confusion which has enabled so many theologians to pose as philosophers, and so many philosophers to proclaim the "fundamental truth" of religion.

True to its tradition of voicing frothy foolishness the *Daily Express* protests against Russia being permitted to join the League of Nations. In its issue for September 15, it says:—

Russia's entry will bring into the League an element of Atheism and anti-Christianity which is contrary to the whole spirit of the League. . . . Every member of the League of Nations' Union who is a Christian, earnestly concerned in defending the Faith should resign from that body forthwith.

This is the first time we have heard that the League of Nations exists for the defence of Christianity. If the argument is worth anything at all it means that everyone in the League meetings who is an Atheist, or an anti-Christian should be at once expelled. And in that case, to be logical, Atheists and anti-Christians should be at once deprived of every public office they hold, and in whatever country they hold it. Then the pure soul of the *Daily Express* leader writer would be soothed.

The yellow press aims at big circulations, and everything must give way to that. The *Church Times* is a religious paper, and while in common with every paper it wishes to have as large a circulation as possible, it does not sink to the level of the *Express* and papers of that type. So, not for the first time, we find it expressing a sense of fairness to those with whose opinions it is in sharp conflict. And on this question of the exclusion of Russia from the League on account of its Atheism it asks, "If Fascist Italy is a member, why not Soviet Russia?" The question is put to Mr. Chesterton, who would probably reply, with his native genius for cock-eyed reasoning, that Mussolini has made terms with the Pope and Stalin has not. Then it adds the following, which should serve to instruct those whose knowledge of history is mainly derived from a morning paper, or from sensational novels:—

But the mission of the League of Nations is to retain world peace, and the question is whether peace is more likely to be retained by the exclusion or admission into its ranks of Bolshevik Russia. The past offers some guide. No one can read Burke's "Letter on the Regicide Peace," and not feel some sympathy with the author's position that it was morally wrong for Europe to make terms with a Power that stood, as Jacobin France stood, for "Atheism by establishment." Burke's advice carried weight, and England's war with the Jacobin Power was carried on for years. But suppose that the English Government had made peace with France, against Burke's advice in 1797, what would have been the consequence? Europe would have escaped the Napoleonic despotism, and the militarist Nationalism, which his tyranny evoked, would never have troubled the world. Germany would have escaped Prussianism, the Republics of Venice and Genoa might have continued, and Italy might have found its unity in a federal system. Trafalgar and Waterloo would never have adorned our historical books, but Ireland might have escaped the horrors of 1798 and the misfortunes of the Act of Union. The industrial movement would probably have developed under more careful legislation, and while English democracy would have developed more slowly, there might have been less friction between classes.

But there were Chestertons in the land then as now. Historic forces do not change much in character, only in form.

The Glasgow Secular Society will commence its indoor meetings next Sunday (September 30) in the St. Andrew's (Mid.) Hall. A lantern lecture on Charles Bradlaugh will be given by Messrs. E. Hale and R. T. White at 7 p.m., which should give a good send off to the session. An attractive syllabus for the season has been prepared, and copies may be had, when ready, from the local Secretary, Mrs. J. D. MacDonald, 149 Sanmore Road, Glasgow, S.2.

We are asked to announce that the Metropolitan Secular Society has arranged to hold its Sunday evening meetings in the (small) Conway Hall, entrance in Theobalds Road, at 7 o'clock. The meeting to-day (September 23) will be a general meeting for members.

The Sunderland Branch N.S.S. closed its open-air work last Sunday, and commences indoor meetings to-day (September 23), when a refugee from Germany, a lady, will speak on "The Menace of Fascism," in the Miners' Hall, Monkwearmouth, Sunderland. From September 30 onwards the meetings will be held in the Co-operative Hall, Green Street, Sunderland. The local Branch is a very active one, and thoroughly deserves the support of all saints in the area.

Mr. G. Whitehead will bring his summer campaign to a close with a visit to Birmingham. The visit will begin to-day (Sunday) and continue for the week, details of which will be found in the Lecture Notice column. Favoured with fine weather Mr. Whitehead has had a successful open-air season, the message of Freethought has been pressed home, and much new interest aroused. Naturally the expenses of such a campaign from May till September are very heavy, but they have all been borne by the Executive of the N.S.S., which was responsible for the arrangements.

Before the Modern Churchmen's Conference, the other day, Canon Streeter reiterated the "unshaken conclusions" he had come to years before—conclusions which had been reached, more or less, years before by Freethinkers. The Canon insists that Mark is the oldest of the Gospels; that Matthew and Luke borrowed from Mark; that they both used largely the same material, not from Mark; and that there was a document, called "Q" originally written in Aramaic, which formed the basis of the three Gospels. Thus the idea that God inspired four historians to write four separate biographies of His Son is thrown entirely overboard. The four Gospels are undoubtedly composite and re-edited documents, written by nobody knows whom or when—and this has been the Freethought position for many years.

Canon Streeter seemed, however, not very anxious to dwell too long upon such an unorthodox position, for he proceeded to declare that "no one who had the slightest feeling could fail to recognize in the Gospels the quality of good poetry." By suggesting this, the worthy Canon managed to get away a little from the questions at issue, which should have been, "Presuming that Matthew, Mark and Luke (or other gentlemen using the names) utilized the 'Q' Aramaic document, who wrote *this* document, on whose authority, had it any authority, and if so, why? And, at what date did Matthew, Mark and Luke appear as full-blooded documents in their own right?" The truth is that the hypothesis of a "Q" document does not solve the mystery of the origin of the Gospels at all. It simply adds another difficulty to be explained away or apologized for; and no long discussion as to the beauty of the so-called sayings of Jesus can hide the fact. The "origin" of the Gospels is still an unsolved mystery.

## Chasing Shadows

IN the last three issues of the *Freethinker*, I have been engaged in studying the nature of a couple of phantoms. One is the nebulous God of advanced theology, the other is that mysterious curiosity the "thing-in-itself," which has haunted the house of philosophy with all the awesome pertinacity of a cherished family ghost. This "thing-in-itself" would be little more than a speculative curiosity were it not that a marriage has been arranged between it and the god of theology, and few have arisen to forbid the union on the ground of the couple being near of kin, or if this objection be negatived on the ground that the relationship is a very distant one, then on alternative ground that it is like permitting a marriage between an ape and a human being because both may have come from the same family stem. To quit metaphor—which is sometimes the best way of arriving at literal fact—the apologetic theologian offers us the God of religion as the equivalent of the philosopher's "thing-in-itself," and the philosopher—of that particular type which does not appear to have quite outgrown primitive superstitions—accepts the identification and beslavers it with a lavishness of capital letters that is reminiscent of a medieval saint losing himself in rhapsodical ecstasy over the mystery of the Saviour's wounds.

In what follows I will try to compress into about three articles, a very lengthy and involved chapter in the history of philosophy, taking as little as possible for granted and making one foothold firm before advancing to another. As usual, I expect I shall be told that I am very profound when I am really very simple, abstract when I am terribly concrete, and accused of being metaphysical when I am keeping within the bounds of strict science.

While I write there lies before me an object, Professor Burt's *Metaphysical Foundations of Modern*

*Science.* It is an object of a dark blue colour, it has a definite width and breadth and thickness, when I lift it I get an impression of hardness and weight, and when I open it I get further impressions of sheets of white paper covered with black marks. Taking this combination of impressions and relating them to other combinations of impressions previously received, I say that this object is a book. It is not any one of these impressions that make me conclude that the object is a book, but the whole of them together, and in particular relation to each other.

Is there anything substantial here that I have left unexpressed in my description of the book? I cannot see that I have left anything unaccounted for. The Idealist, of that variety known as a Solipsist, would say that I have omitted to say that the book exists in *me*. The strict follower of Bishop Berkeley would say that I have omitted to state that the book exists as an object of my perception only because it previously exists as an object in the mind of God. And a Materialist, who has not quite outgrown the theological stage, would say that I have omitted to point out that apart from these sensations which I have described, and which are affections of my nervous structure, there is something called "matter" which is the cause of what I feel. Now for the moment I do not wish to criticize these statements, further than to say that as I know no method by which man can transcend the range of his own consciousness, it seems to me that if I have stated correctly all that is involved in my apprehension of the book, then the "matter" which is not known as a sense-affection, the "mind" which is not known as a succession of "mental states," are both of a piece. Each is assuming something that is not given in the phenomena before us, and when that is done, whether it is called mind or matter, or God, is a difference in name only. I will make clear the meaning of "mind" and "matter," later.

Let us test my account of the book in another way. Suppose I take away from the totality of my perceptions, which for me are the signs—the shape, the colour, the weight, the hardness, what is there left? So far as I can see there is nothing at all left. The book, as a book has gone. A book means to me just that bundle of qualities I have named. I might say that the book is a "thing" possessing the qualities I have described. But although I have no objection to putting it in this way once the terms are properly understood, the use of "thing" at this stage would beg the whole question and would enable the theologian to sing his song about "Reality," and the metaphysician to chant his mysteries about "Substance." In the matter of dealing with the book, I am like a child, although I am expressing myself more elaborately than a child would. I say that the object which lies before me is a book, and that what I see and handle is the *real* book. It is not a projection of some "real" thing, the nature of which I cannot even conceive; and even though a scientist comes along and gives me a complete account of the object in terms of a technical physics and chemistry, the situation will not be altered in the least.

But having got thus far, we may try a little analysis. The book, so far, is made up of what I see and feel. But what is it that I see and feel? There is a little catch in that "what is it?" and I wish to keep close to the facts. So that instead of saying, "What is it?" etc., I will say, what is it that we mean or imply when we say that the thing before me is a book? If I say that it is "matter," which in certain situations affects me as a book; and if I mean by "matter," the things I know, and not a ghostly entity I do not know, then I am actually saying the same thing twice

over. But whether I call it matter or anything else, it is as a group of sense-impressions that I know it.

It must be always remembered that it is by such signs as weight or colour, or shape, or taste, or smell, or by some combinations of these that I know any object. But science tells me that weight is a matter of muscular tension, that a sense of colour is a question of certain waves or pulsations falling upon the eye. Sever the optic nerve and I lose all colour as connected with the book, and it becomes an object known only by its hardness and form. The same answer, in substance, meets me with regard to every sign by which I recognize any *thing*, and every *thing* around me. The only world I know is this one, the consciousness of which comes to me through the gateway of the senses; and if I take away from any object all that comes to me in the shape of sensations immediate or derived, then, so far as I can see, there is nothing at all left. When I take a piece of iron and say that it is hot or heavy, it is me that *feels* hot, not the iron, it is me that feels hard or heavy, not the iron. Ultimately knowledge depends upon feeling. A thing that does not arouse feeling has no existence for us. Names are the signs that consciousness affixes to the feelings that are aroused. The existence of anything apart from feeling—immediate or derivative—seems to me as unreal as the "soul" of the savage and the "spirit" of the theologian.

It will probably seem to those not well acquainted with philosophical controversy, that I am trying to prove that nothing exists outside my consciousness. I can assure such that I am aiming at nothing of the kind, and believe nothing of the kind. I am, I repeat, an uncompromising and, I hope, a scientific materialist. Being such I have not the least use for the ghostly "entities" of either the theologian or of the metaphysician. Nor am I impressed with them when they come to me dressed up in the raiment of science, which has often been, I suspect, hired for the occasion. I do not see that the underlying Nounenon of the Greeks, the Substance of Spinoza, the Matter of Locke, the Divine mind of Berkeley, or the "existence" of which only "modes" are known have any better foundation than the Soul of the savage or the Spirit of the metaphysician. All these unknown substances are to me, as a Materialist, inconceivable and completely useless. With regard to this "thing-in-itself," under its many aliases, I agree with George Henry Lewes:—

The "thing-in-itself" is a metaphysical fetic. It replaces the old conception of Essence, which had replaced the earlier conception of a spirit, or demon, living in the object, animating it, and working by it. The savage regards his fetic in the light of a vehicle for the spirit which acts through it; the metaphysician regards the phenomenal object in the light of a vehicle for the manifestation of Nounenon, which shines through it. The Unknowable Absolute is the monotheistic development of this feticism.

That is putting the situation neatly, and with the proper historical perspective. To it I need only add that whether this manifestation of feticism comes under the name of "matter," or "spirit," or "mind," or "God," no material difference that I can see, exists.

I am trying to indicate a sound scientific method by which we may hope to understand the world; and there is one thing here that we may take as some sort of a basis. This is the old materialistic maxim, Nothing in the intellect that is not in the senses. Block up the channel of the senses and bit by bit our consciousness of the world disappears, and *no-thing* is left. Not only this world, but any conceivable world, for while we may think of other existences, we can do

more than extend to other times or spheres the world we know differently arranged. We may think of men whose heads grow under their armpits, plants that talk, and animals that are rooted in the soil, but we are only combining in a new way the various parts of our experience. And to ask what the world is like apart from the picture of it as it exists in our consciousness is to ask what a room is like when the ceiling, the walls, and the floor have been taken away.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(To be continued.)

## Miscellany on the Salvation Army

DID the case of Albert Davis of Swindon—who played and may still play the tenor horn in the Gorse Hill Corps Salvation Army Band—receive the attention it merited? It may be remembered that, contrary to his duty as a "Salvation soldier," he bought—or rather to use his own words, "was pressed" into buying—a ticket for the Irish Sweepstake on the Grand National. Moreover, he "drew" a horse, viz., Egremont. In this situation the temptation was great and Mr. Davis fell. Faced with the alternative of sacrificing his chance to win £30,000 or being compelled to leave the Salvation Army (S.A.) he preferred Mammon to Jehovah—the blood and fire divinity of the "Army."

Egremont failed him; not so the S.A. After two weeks they issued a statement of their readiness to reinstate the fallen soldier providing "true repentance" was shown. It was not stated, but we venture the conclusion, that no better way to show such repentance was open to Mr. Davis than the devotion of the greater part of the £686 5s. 6d., which he received for holding an unplaced horse, to the purposes of the S.A.

Here in miniature we have material for reflection! The S.A. defines gambling as a sin. The words of William Booth are unequivocal:—

The Salvation soldier must have nothing whatever to do with gambling. Gambling is in essence a form of dishonesty, since it consists in trying to obtain from another something for which no adequate return is given.

Thus gambling is contrary to the will of Jehovah. Yet twice, both in the buying and the keeping of the ticket, Jehovah was vanquished by Mammon in the breast of Albert Davis. Is this surprising? Jehovah's representatives in the S.A. have bound themselves to the doctrine of the virtue of repentance "that wipeth away all sin." Consequently Albert was convinced that his God, although a jealous one, had no objection to being betrayed so long as the betrayer crawled back with sufficient humility to re-register his servitude. He knew that in terms of "earthly wealth" he was certain to obtain £686 5s. 6d., for the transitory betrayal, and that he would be far richer still in having repented a really big sin, one that could be dramatically proclaimed to crowded meetings. Had he continued his otherwise blameless life, he would probably have remained a mere tenor horn. Now he may become an evangelist.

In view of these circumstances his attitude can hardly be condemned, but the incident is illustrative of the manner in which the S.A. through their doctrine, constantly discredit the God they worship. We are offered another example in the recent deliberations to choose the successor of General Higgins. A solemn

declaration signed by all members of the High Council was issued shortly after the appointment of the General-elect which said:—

This puts on record our confident belief that we have been Divinely guided in this matter, and accept the result as a revelation of the will of God.

At the same time, whilst others were congratulating Commander Evangeline Booth, Mrs. Bramwell Booth, widow of the deceased General, declined to make any statement on the appointment of the new General! Now to reflecting Salvationists—if such there be—it is surely not calculated to increase their respect for the S.A. God to know that whilst ignoring the wife of a former General, he works so discordantly through his accredited representatives that they are forced to haggle over methods of nomination for five days, and finally to make their decision by majority vote (the figures of the ballot were not published!). We cannot help thinking that in view of the display of human frailty which the deliberations afforded, the S.A. were ill-advised to make Jehovah responsible for them.

Returning to Albert Davis who sinned and repented, it is interesting to compare his case with that of Lord Rothermere, who this year gave the S.A. a middle-page boost in his *Daily Mail* during their self-denial week. The editor himself signed the article and finished with the information that the paper had sent a cheque for 200 guineas as a donation to the S.A. How did Lord Rothermere obtain these 200 guineas? Can it be said that the manner in which they came into his exchequer had no resemblance to that of "trying to obtain from another something for which no adequate return is given"? Lord Rothermere belongs to a class whose whole income is thrown up without any adequate return on their part. It is a question of fact, and not—as is generally considered—of opinion, that the social system as at present constituted ensures an income to many who make no adequate return for what they receive.

Yet for the S.A. the 200 guineas of Lord Rothermere are untainted by sin. More than that, the S.A. appears fundamentally to believe that the members of Lord Rothermere's class are incapable of sin. At least, it acts on the assumption that they are not in need of salvation, by directing its activities exclusively towards the "lower orders." We have yet to see the spectacle of an "army" band playing in Park Lane. It is even possible that if one played beneath the window of the residence of Lord Rothermere, it would be removed as a nuisance.

The explanation of this attitude on the part of the S.A. probably lies in the fact that it has a dual purpose. Apart from salvation, it is, as we all know, concerned with charity—both being administered together. Soup kitchens, cheap beds and the like can, however, only be a permanent feature of a society in which fundamental injustice exists in the distribution of wealth. For only then is there a class prepared to give and another class prepared to receive. In such society the givers of charity, if they are *humane*, find it a salve for their conscience; if they are *religious*, it is an investment with a return in Heaven; if they are *political*, it is another "bulwark against Bolshevism," i.e., a safeguard against revolt resulting from their tyranny. The receivers of charity have usually suffered so acutely from poverty that this sharp knife has cut away their human dignity, and charity comes to blunt its edge. As the S.A. stands as an intermediary and to a large extent an interceptor, between the givers and the receivers, its *raison d'être* is a society in which Rothermere's guineas are symbolical of its main source of income.

Lord Rothermere must no doubt consider the S.A. a very good investment. Its total annual income (at least, that part of it passing through the international headquarters in London) is only in the neighbourhood of a quarter of a million pounds, and with this money it does much service to the class without sin but not without money. We recall the services rendered to them during the last war. In October, 1914, it was announced that more than a thousand men had joined the colours from the Salvation Army Social Institutions, and at that time Harold Begbie gave expression to the prevailing mood in his poem "Saved!":—

A thousand strong and more are we, all taken up and saved,  
A thousand broken wretched brutes who loafed and boozed  
and raved,

And but for these Salvationists, ha, there's a tale to tell!  
We might have been in prison now and finished up in hell.  
Instead of that we're marching with a Hallelujah swing,  
A thousand men and more (salute!) for England and the  
King!

We've lost our taste for Wrong, and got the feel for what is  
Right,

And we've learned the finest trick on earth for winning any  
fight.

Ho, we've slung our sins behind us,  
And we're marching to the front,  
If the Devil wants to find us,  
Why, it's there he'll have to hunt.  
We've a feel of soap and water,  
And we're in with Christian men;  
Ho, a chap can do some slaughter  
When he knows he's born agen.

Another and more recent example is afforded in an annual report (1933) of the Salvation Army in Illinois, U.S.A. The Divisional Commander wrote:

The greatest work of the Salvation Army, however, is not in the material relief given, but that which we feel is of greatest importance is the task of maintaining the morale of the people we assist. . . . Our job is to cheer him up to realize that "better days are ahead." . . . Sometimes he comes to us with a tinge of the Bolshevik in his manner, but he goes out with new hope.

In conclusion, a passage from Bernard Shaw's preface to his play "Major Barbara" forms an admirable summary of the purpose of the Salvation Army and similar religious institutions:—

Churches are suffered to exist only on condition that they preach submission to the State as at present capitalistically organized. The Church of England itself is compelled to add to the thirty-six articles in which it formulates its religious tenets, three more in which it apologetically protests that the moment any of these articles comes in conflict with the State, it is to be entirely renounced, abjured, violated, abrogated and abhorred, the policeman being a much more important person than any of the Persons of the Trinity. And this is why no tolerated Church nor Salvation Army can ever win the entire confidence of the poor. It must be on the side of the police and the military, no matter what it believes or disbelieves; and as the police and the military are the instruments by which the rich rob and oppress the poor (on legal and moral principles made for the purpose), it is not possible to be on the side of the poor and of the police at the same time. Indeed the religious bodies, as the almoners of the rich, become a sort of auxiliary police, taking off the insurrectionary edge of poverty with coals and blankets, bread and treacle, and soothing and cheering the victims with hopes of immense and inexpensive happiness in another world, when the process of working them to premature death in the service of the rich is complete in this.

ALAN FLANDERS.

## The Odin Religion

I HAVE, I think, made a discovery. I have found an article by Thomas Carlyle, unmentioned by any of his biographers. Mr. Richard Hearne Shepherd, who compiles a careful bibliography of Carlyle, does not mention the article. This fact, I confess, gave me pause. Had I found a mare's nest? I read the article again, and leave the question to the discerning reader acquainted with Carlyle. The article in question has first place in the October number of the *Westminster Review*, 1854. It takes the shape of a review of Simrock's *Edda*, Uhland's *Myth of Thor*, Grimm's *Teutonic Mythology*, etc., and is entitled "The Odin Religion." It sets out by saying:—

The English may be considered fortunate in their kindred. Across the Atlantic they have a remarkable family of cousins, of singular energy, and, perhaps, the most expanding, mobile, multiplying, "go-ahead" human creatures that ever "exploited" this terrestrial globe. Altogether modern, and with a History respectable, indeed, but of only two short chapters—Puritanism and Revolution—with no deep Past to allure the imagination or divide the attention, and with a Present as yet vague, undefined, and hardly more settled than the halt of the exploring traveller, whose night's rest is hurried and feverish with onward thoughts for to-morrow. Their keen faculties and energies are all set on "progress"—working for times that are not, but will be—for a Future that is to "beat all creation"—a Future, ambitious, vast as the imagination and appetites of man. Even Goethe, in a moment of despondency, almost envies America for its freedom from "ruined castles," useless remembrances, and vain disputes, which entangle old nations and trouble their hearts, when they ought to be strong for present action.

Then he turns to our other cousins, the Teutonic people who "cultivate a loving piety for that rich and still fertile Past, from which the Americans have cut themselves loose altogether, and about which the English, with a distinct and proud history of their own, and busy withal with other things, without renouncing their share or interest in it, take less concern." A sketch is given of German history, afterwards much amplified in *Frederick the Great*, and then we are taken back to "their common belief, the Odin religion as we will call it." In a note he says: "It might be called *English* or *Saxon* with as much right as *Scandinavian*. It was the religion of the whole Teutonic race, and came—we know not whence."

Carlyle, as for the nonce I shall call the writer, recites the story from Bede of the old Saxon chief who compared the life of man to the bird flying in at one door and out at another—a passage afterwards used by Emerson in his essay on Immortality. "The sense of the Infinite was awake in that heart," he says—and this he thinks characteristic of Teutonic man; "but the supreme virtue of the free, vigorous, cheery Teutonic man was valour, action, positive, not negative, virtues; none but heroes entered Valhalla; the nobodies went to the dull limbo of oblivion. "This healthy strength," he declares, "is ever accompanied by a proportionate measure of tenderness and pity." And there is a third quality—"the feeling of wonder, the sense of the infinite, which lies at the base of all religion as well as of poetry."

The ancient Teutonic man, with his healthful, joyous strength and elasticity, roaming over sea and land in pursuit of manly adventure, knew no fear of death; neither was life mournful to him, or a mere burden to be endured for the sake of "hereafter." life was for action, and the gods were propitious to the brave. Yet was his soul strangely affected by the ever-shifting, changing nature of things. The

bright day is beautiful, and such a majestic luminary must certainly rule for ever; but a little while, and the gray twilight creeps on, enveloping the day as with a veil, and anon black mysterious night covers the earth. What has become of the day and its fiery ruler? And there is the glorious summer-season, clothing the hills with verdure, and inspiring all creatures with joy. Its heat has melted the icebergs, it is so strong; surely it must prevail? But the days grow shorter, and the leaves wither and fall, the hills turn gray and sad; black clouds come riding upon the back of the whirlwind, and lo! wild winter is uppermost again, and the keen Yötuns are busy destroying the fair handiwork of gods and men: where is Thor the Thunderer?—Life itself wastes and wanes; this arm, once so vigorous and all-powerful, has grown unsteady and helpless; Iduna, the beautiful maiden, bright as the blooming apple-tree, is old now, and shrunken, and her eyes are dim. Are we the same we were, or what are we?—These apprehensive feelings, inexpressible “pre-sentiments” working as “inner experiences” in the Teutonic soul from of old, had their important share in the building up of the Odin religion.

Then come descriptions of the tree Yggdrasil, the gods, and Yötuns, or giants, in which, incidentally, he compares the office of the original *Pontifex*, who, standing on the bridge which separated hostile armies, made peace between them, with “the present Pontiff with French bayonets keeping the peace for him upon his own bridge.”

The account of the recovery of Thor’s hammer is too long for quotation here. But every line shouts the name of its author, Thomas Carlyle, and makes me wonder if any Carlylean can have read the article without recognizing the powerful voice. Fiery passion, prejudice, grim humour, and soft-melting humanity are mixed, as also in the oft-told story of the death of Balder the beautiful, encompassed by Loki, whom the reviewer declares is “not unlike Goethe’s Mephistopheles, done in the rough.” A characteristic touch is this. “The life of the gods, we said, is serene upon a ground of sadness.” “The Greek gods have their combat behind them; it lasted but ten years, and got itself transacted once for all. Olympos has triumphed over Orthys, and the Jovites have ever after an easy, jolly life of it. Not so the Asen; no easy, idle life of mere graceful or graceless gallantries is theirs; chaos is ever threatening, and has to be kept out by unsleeping vigilance.” Again he says:—

As a counterpart to the “sons of God who saw the daughters of men that they were fair” we meet, in the later “Heroic Sagas,” with cases of love adventures, and of union between the sons of men and those Valkyrie—daughters of the gods; unions not productive of serene happiness, but of happiness tinged with sorrow. The low chant of a sad, sweet melody makes itself heard amidst the clangour of steel and wild war-whoop of these heroic poems; death-valour and gentleness, devotion and revenge; the stout heart overcome by the force of irresistible attraction; immortal woman yearning for the love of mortal man, whose prowess is so divine; inexorable destiny over-ruling all.

The period of conflict between Odinism and Christianity extended over eight centuries, from the fourth to the eleventh. The writer of this article tells with gusto how “one Radbot, Frisian king, while already standing in the font to receive the sacrament of baptism, asked: ‘Where are my ancestors?’ ‘In hell, of course,’ answered the priest, impatiently. ‘And yours?’ ‘In heaven,’ was the reply. ‘Then will I rather be with my brave forefathers than with you paltry Christians!’ exclaimed the king, and leaped cut of the font unbaptized.” Motley, in his *Rise of the Dutch Republic* (Introd. v.), tells the same story;

but instead of “paltry” has “little starveling band of Christians.” The *Westminster* reviewer also tells of the Frankish king, Chlodwig, who, when solicited by his Christian wife to confess Christ, answered with a sneer: “Your God is not even of divine descent; is a mere plebeian!” The reviewer evidently looks on the Odin religion as the more manly, and Christianity as the more womanly, faith.

And so the Odin religion went out, and the Bible came in. The ideals of the fathers became the horrors of the children. Venerable Bede, as we saw, called the old gods “Devils”; and Scholasticus Adam etymologies Wuotan into *Wütherich*: “Wodan, id est furor!” And thus, by unknown stages, the mighty Odin degenerated at last into a Wild-Huntsman of the *Odenwald*, an Opera-Guy of the *Freischütz*; while the once so graceful Freia bestrides a broomstick, and leads the chorus of witches on the Blocksberg! “*Das ist das Loos des Schönen hier auf Erden*,” it cannot remain beautiful for ever, it becomes litter and an encumbrance when the virtue is gone out of it. Happy if the “virtue” gets clothed in new beauty!

Yet is there one prophecy of the Völu-seeress which is being singularly fulfilled: Thor’s offspring shall survive, “Modi and Magni shall swing *Miöllnir*, and fight it out to the end.” The Hammer shall prevail. Thor, the subduer of chaotic forces, the pioneer of industry, he alone of all the Asen is still honoured amongst us in a practical way. And the new generations, having lost the faculty (to the inexpressible regret of friend Simrock and others) for treating nature “mythically,” have entered upon the task of treating her scientifically; which to its own extent is also—as the gods said of Balder’s invulnerability—“a great advantage”; and will be more so some day, when men, driven painfully and inch by inch out of their temporal nestling-places in the Partial, will learn to find rest in the Whole.

If this is not by Thomas Carlyle, I should much like to know who thus imitated, not only his style, but his inmost thoughts, and found the first place in the *Westminster Review*. It will be noticed that this helps to fill up the long period of silence between the publication of the *Life of John Sterling* (1851) and that of *Frederick the Great* (1858). It may be observed that all the volumes reviewed are German, and, when in Germany procuring material for the *Frederick*, Carlyle would doubtless be attracted by all bearing on the Odin religion, which he had lectured on in 1839, and which he reverted to in his *Early Kings of Norway* (1875).

(Reprinted.)

J. M. WHEELER.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

### LONDON.

#### INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, S. K. Ratcliffe—“*Indicating a Nation*.”

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Theobalds Road Entrance): 7.0 (for 7.15 prompt), General Meeting. Intending Members invited.

#### OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCHES N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 6.0, Mr. Bryant.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Sunday, September 23, Mr. C. Tuson. Highbury Corner, 8.0, Mr. C. Tuson. South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Monday, September 24, Mr. L. Ebury. Highbury Corner, 8.0, Thursday, September 27, Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 7.0, Sunday, September 23, Mr. C. Tuson. Rushcroft Road, near Brixton Town Hall, 8.0, Tuesday, September 25, Mr. P. Goldman. Stonhouse Street, Clapham, 8.0, Wednesday, September 26, Mr. L. Ebury.

(Continued on Page 607.)

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(Continued from page 606.)

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Corner of Deanery Road, opposite the Library, Water Lane, Stratford, E.): 7.0, Mr. P. Goldman.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.30, Sunday, Mr. W. B. Collins. 3.30, Messrs. Wood, Bryant, Collins and Tuson. 6.30, Messrs. Wood, Bryant, Collins, Saphin, Tuson and Hyatt. Wednesday, 7.30, Messrs. Collins and Tuson. Thursday, 7.30, Messrs. Saphin and Wood. Friday, 7.30, Messrs. Bryant and Collins. *Freethinker* on sale outside Park Gates, and Literature to order.

### COUNTRY.

#### INDOOR.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Miners' Hall, Monkwearmouth): 7.30, A German woman refugee will speak on the "Menace of Fascism." Supported by Councillor Hildreth (Darlington). Chairman—Mr. Allen Flanders.

#### OUTDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Bull Ring): 7.0, Sunday, September 23, Mr. G. Whitehead. Mr. Whitehead will speak each evening, Monday, September 24 to Friday, September 28 inclusive, at 7.30.

BLAKEBURN MARKET, 7.0, Sunday, September 23, Mr. J. Clayton.

BRIGHTON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Level): 3.30, Mr. J. T. Byrne—"Disendow the Church of England."

BURNLEY (Barden Lane): 7.30, Tuesday, September 25, Mr. J. Clayton.

LYTH (Market Place): 7.0, Monday, September 24, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Corner of High Park Street, and Park Road): 8.0, Thursday, September 20, Messrs. J. V. Shortt and C. McKelvie. Queen's Drive, opposite Walton Baths, 8.0, Sunday, September 23, Messrs. J. V. Shortt and W. Parry.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Platt Fields, Rusholme): 3.0, Mr. Sam Cohen, A Lecture.

NORTH SHIELDS (Harbour View): 7.0, Tuesday, September 25, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SEAHAM HARBOUR (Church Street): 8.0, Saturday, September 22, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Wouldhave Memorial): 7.30, Monday, September 24, Mr. A. Flanders—"Christianity and Slavery."

TEE-SIDE BRANCH N.S.S. (The Crescent, Middlesborough): 7.0, Sunday, September 23, Mr. J. T. Brighton

STOCKTON (Market Place): 7.0, Tuesday, September 25, Mr. Robson (Darlington).

WHEATLEY LANE, 7.30, Friday September 21, Mr. J. Clayton.

RISHTON, 3.0, Sunday, September 23, Mr. J. Clayton.

## NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

President - - - CHAPMAN COHEN.  
General Secretary - R. H. ROSETTI.

68 FARRINGDON STREET, LONDON, E.C. 4.

THE National Secular Society was founded in 1866 by Charles Bradlaugh. He remained its President until shortly before his death, and the N.S.S. has never ceased to live up to the tradition of "Thorough" which Bradlaugh by his life so brilliantly exemplified.

The N.S.S. is the only organization of militant Freethinkers in this country. It aims to bring into one body all those who believe the religions of the world to be based on error, and to be a source of injury to the best interests of Society. It claims that all political laws and moral rules should be based upon purely secular considerations. It is without sectarian aims or party affiliations.

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Secularism accordingly seeks to dispel superstition; to spread education; to disestablish religion; to rationalize morality; to promote peace; to dignify labour; to extend material well-being; and to realize the self-government of the people.

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