

# THE FREETHINKER

▪ EDITED *by* CHAPMAN COHEN ▪

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

**Views and Opinions**

**Religion and Morals**

I LEFT untouched last week the question put me by a correspondent, whether in rejecting religion, and not merely specific teachings, Freethinkers are not blind to the good done by religion, and the good things associated with it. I have dealt with this point before, but in one form or another it is continually cropping up, and it is worth dealing with again. We meet in one form or another the belief that, however much Freethinkers may get along without religion, it is necessary to others, either because they find comfort in it, or because it serves as an auxiliary police force. It was stated in a modified form by no less a person than Herbert Spencer, in the expressed fear of the calamity that might overtake society if one set of beliefs were destroyed before another set had taken its place, and in another form by Sir James Frazer in his *Psyche's Task*, in which he argued, while fully admitting the immense evils done by religion, that taking purely civil or secular institutions, they had been safeguarded and perpetuated, in some measure, by the religious beliefs that had accompanied them. When two such men as Spencer and Frazer are found expressing this conviction, one need not be greatly surprised to find it common with many lesser lights.

But whether the belief be held by the "man in the street," or by highly-placed and deservedly respected individuals, it remains, in my judgment, equally fallacious. It can only receive a plausible justification by giving to religion a quite arbitrary definition, by leaving out of account the social quality of ethical feeling, and by assuming that the reasons men give for their actions are the real motives animating them. Not one of these assumptions is in accord with the facts.

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**'The Great Taboo**

I can agree that good things are associated with religion, and this for several reasons. First, religious belief, as I have so often pointed out, is originally associated with everything. There is not a thing that

happens in human society, not a thing that occurs in nature at large, that has not had originally a religious interpretation. But this association has, in itself no ethical value whatever. It is simply an expression of that primitive interpretation of nature from which all religion comes; and to stress the good things that are associated with religion, while ignoring the bad ones, is to miss the real facts of the situation. In the earliest human stage, where religion is most powerful, the most trivial, the most innocuous action has just the same emphasis laid upon it as the important ones upon which the preservation of life and of the group depends. In the Bible, which represents a comparatively late stage of development, picking up sticks on the Sabbath Day is visited with the same penalty as the taking of life.

Both Walter Bagehot and Sir James Frazer, while recognizing the evil side of the association between religious belief and conduct, still held that some credit was due to religion because according to Frazer, special stress was laid upon certain good actions, and according to Bagehot, the fears created by religion helped to break man into the social yoke. This is the last argument I should have expected an evolutionist to use. In the first place there is every reason for believing that man was always of the gregarious type, and therefore needed no particular breaking in; he was always a social, if not a sociable, animal. And the more savage is the state in which we find man, the more subject he is to social customs and obligations. The action of religion here is not to break him in, but to prevent his breaking out, to take the step of defying custom and initiating a new and better line of conduct.

But the significant thing is that this stressing of the moralizing part played by religion almost completely reverses the relations between man and religion. When Goering said recently that the only law in Germany was the will of Hitler, and that all the judges had to do was to carry out his wishes, the essentially religious German Fascism was expressing admirably the original relations between ethics and religion. It is entirely a question of carrying out what is believed to be the will of the gods; there is no other rule of conduct. In theory, ethics has no existence and the function of religion is to see that certain rules are obeyed. It would not be right to call primitive religion immoral or moral, it is simply amoral. It is in this way that cannibalism and infanticide, the slaughter of old people, and the practice of human sacrifice (which hardly bears out Sir James Frazer's assumption that religion has increased the respect for human life) come to take the rank of religious obligations. It is what pleases the gods, not what benefits man that is of vital consideration.

To this statement the obvious reply is that to some extent at least obedience to the gods is enforced because it benefits man. That must be admitted, but

the admission introduces a factor that is generally overlooked, namely, the operation of a selective influence in social life, which tends to restrict practices within a limit that does not threaten the destruction of the group.

We may take the Hebrew custom of the sacrifice of the first-born, not merely of animals, but of human beings. The Bible demands that "The first-born of thy sons thou shalt give unto me. Likewise, thou shalt do with thine oxen, and with thy sheep; seven days shall it be with its dam; and on the eighth day thou shalt give it to me." It is quite obvious that if this rule had been carried out with all births there would have been a speedy end to any group that practiced it. It would have involved group suicide. It could be practiced with the first-born, because other children would be permitted to live. But here is a practice which can owe its origin to nothing but sheer superstition, and so far as religion is concerned there was nothing whatever to end the practice or even to check it. Even to-day among the Jews, the first-born is bought back by the parents, and the original practice is continued by symbol, just as the cannibalistic religious practice of eating the god (a man who is made a God by a ceremonial death) is perpetuated in the Christian doctrine of the sacrament or the mass.

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#### How Man Civilizes his Gods

If, then, we separate the two factors, the religious factor and that of the unconscious selective power of the human group, I cannot see that anything is left to religion on the credit side of the account. There was obviously nothing on the religious side that could be counted to religion for the growth of more enlightened views or more humane considerations. Where could it come from? But religion itself becomes subject to the play of intellectual development and a better ethical opinion. Originally, this influence is mainly unconscious. Religious practices that have a direct and deadly influence on group life must soon be discarded or the group itself dies out, and there is an end of the religion and those who believe in it. No parasite can perpetuate itself by killing its host; and the force of social selection compels religion to modify its teaching so that it may be able to live. And so soon as we come to the stage when man is fairly conscious of the real significance of moral rules, and is conscious of the nature of social life, the influence of moral feeling on religious doctrines is marked. One may say that instead of man striving to live in accordance with the desire of the gods, the gods are made to conform to man's standard of what is right. That is why we find the substitution of a payment for the redemption of the first-born instead of the sacrifice, the substitution of a symbolic eating of the god instead of devouring the man-god himself, the gradual toning down of the severity of the doctrine of eternal damnation and finally its complete rejection, even by believers in deity; the rejection of the religious duty of killing the heretic and unbeliever and the acceptance of toleration in matters of religion. In not a single instance can this series of modifications be traced to religion, but religion is too stubbornly conservative not to retain in its teachings and practices very many traces of its real character. The modification of religious teachings is everywhere and always the tribute that religion is compelled to pay to the growth of the moral and social feelings.

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#### Religion and Life

I cannot now follow the argument further and in fuller detail, but I hope I have made quite clear on what grounds I emphatically deny that religion, as such, has ever been of the slightest benefit to man-

kind and why I prefer not even to use the word. I do find that there is not a single evil—I use the expression without any qualification whatever—that has not been taught as a good in the name of religion, and not a single good that has not been branded as an evil. I do not think that I am running any risk of emptying the baby out with the bath water—at least, not any baby that is worth preserving. The baby that is in the religious bath is one of those monstrous caricatures of humanity that most doctors would wisely kill, and most parents would wish to see dead.

I do not question that all religions have embodied some good teachings, and very many religious men have practiced them. How could it be otherwise? A religion to live, must conform, as I have already said, to the conditions that are vital to social existence, and a religious man is a social being as well as a religious believer. It is not a question of whether there have been good things associated with religion, neither is it a question of denying that many religious men and women have been socially and morally good. It is really a matter of disentangling different influences, of "giving unto the gods what are theirs and unto society that which belongs to it," to paraphrase a New Testament text. Religions that remain true to themselves die out, and I would like to see all religions true to themselves. But religions that palter and pander, religions that act like the shadiest of shady politicians, and are willing to drop doctrine after doctrine, and one rejected teaching after another in order to keep in being, are always a standing danger to human progress. That is why I deny that religion has ever done any good; it can only continue by professing virtues to which it has no inherent claim, and by surreptitiously aiding influences that serve as a drag on the development of man.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## The Road to Ruin

"If I had been a bishop with an income of five to fifteen thousand a year, I should have had an inexhaustible source of rejoicing and merriment in the generosity, if not in the credulity, of my countrymen."—*John Bright.*

A MUDDLED schoolboy, replying to a question as to Oliver Cromwell's death, wrote: "The Great Protector said: 'Had I but served my God as I had served my King he would not have left me naked in my old age.'" This is a delicious example of unconscious humour, and muddled adults often give as much cause for smiles as the befogged schoolboy. A recent case is that of the Right-Reverend Guy Warman, Bishop of Manchester, who astonished an audience recently at Leigh, Lancashire, by declaring: "If I have to remain Bishop of Manchester for a long time I shall have to go into the bankruptcy court. Since I became Bishop of Manchester I have not saved a penny, and I have spent a good deal of the money I saved in other years before I came to Manchester. People often asked why the Archbishop of Canterbury should have a salary of £15,000 a year. If he depended on his salary, and nothing more, he would become bankrupt also."

The cream of the joke is that this pathetic plea of privation has been heard before. The Bishop of London some years ago, explained, in full-throated tones, to a perplexed congregation that, after drawing his episcopal salary of £10,000 annually for fifteen years, he was £2,000 on the wrong side of the ledger, and actually far worse off financially, than when he started the really awful experience of following in the footsteps of the Carpenter of Nazareth. On such reckless expenditure it is abundantly clear that had

his lordship's salary been that of His Grace of Canterbury, he must have finished his career in a Church Army shelter, or on the inhospitable seats on the Embankment or Trafalgar Square, instead of a bath-chair at the Riviera.

Why should these right-reverend Fathers-in-God be in such a condition of dire distress? Why should the narrow way of faith be the road to ruin? The ancient ecclesiastical endowments of the Church of England are far more solid than the alleged golden streets of the New Jerusalem, and they are not invested in a Bank of Faith, but in freehold properties and gilt-edged securities. Lord Addington's Parliamentary return of 1891 showed that the annual value of these ancient ecclesiastical endowments was then £5,469,171, exclusive of modern private benefactions, which amounted to £284,000 yearly. Since then the properties have doubled in value.

The two Bishops of London and Manchester may tearfully predict their bankruptcy, but neither of them has yet darkened the portals of Carey Street. The numerous higher ecclesiastics have also evaded the workhouses and casual wards in the most skilful manner. Why should they, like Nebuchadnezzar, be reduced to eating grass? Forty of the principal bishops shared no less a sum than £182,000 yearly, and palaces and town-houses are thrown in. The bachelor Bishop of London, who admits he is on the road to ruin, has to keep body and soul together on a modest stipend of £300 weekly, a sum sufficient to keep fifty working-class families in comparative comfort.

The plain, blunt truth is that the Church of England is the richest church in all Christendom. At the top there are Prelates with seats in the House of Lords, where they never do any good service for the democracy; at the bottom are a multitude of holders of benefices far better off than the ordinary man. Anyone who cares to consult Crockford's *Clerical Directory* can see that the average "reverend" enjoys a comfortable livelihood. In addition, he lives in a decent house, often nicer than most of his neighbours'. As an index of what goes on under the banner of this Anglican Church, it may be mentioned that within the narrow confines of the City of London proper, £50,000 is spent each year in ministering to a small resident population of caretakers, policemen, and Jewish people. The latter, who form a large proportion of the total, never trouble the pew-openers of the Government Religion. Nor is this all, for, not long since, the Church authorities admitted that nineteen of these places of worship were derelict, and earmarked them for future destruction.

It is strange that the remaining three hundred bishops and suffragan bishops of the Church of England have never echoed the lamentations of their brothers-in-the-Lord, of London and Manchester. They have rather preferred to imitate the quiet and cautious reserve of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, who pocket large salaries and say nothing of finance or balance-sheets.

Ecclesiastics frequently leave large sums of money when they "shuffle off this mortal coil." A former Bishop of Colchester left estate valued at £60,848. Bishop Creighton, who used to talk of the fearful struggles of the wretched bishops to keep out of debt, left £29,500. Archbishop Tait left £35,000, and Archbishop Benson a similar amount. The biggest episcopal estate of recent times was that of Bishop Walsham How, who left £72,240. A good second to this was Bishop Tuffnell's £65,800, and Bishop Phillpott left £60,000, whilst Archbishop Thomson left £55,000, and Bishop Trollope £50,790. Compared with these sums, the £19,361 of Bishop Harvey Good-

win, the £10,000 of Bishop Tozer, and the £12,605 of Bishop Pelham seem very modest.

The clergy are not nearer the poverty line than millions of their countrymen. The late Judge Rentoul stated that at the annual banquets given to the clergy at the Mansion House, London, seventy-four bottles of champagne were drunk, costing then £40. He added he actually saw those figures, and he was told that the amount was every year about the same. It is singularly appropriate that this same Mansion House should have been the scene of the Bishop of London's hysterical outburst concerning the starvation of the wretched clergy.

It is all very ironic, for these long-faced ecclesiastics take themselves very seriously as heaven-sent individuals commissioned by an alleged Omnipotence to reclaim a very saucy world from very naughty ways. Styling themselves "Reverend" and "Right-Reverend," these men have always endeavoured to keep their sacred caste separate from the ordinary world of ordinary men and women. And now, falling on stony ground, some of the bishops are bleating that they are well on the road to ruin and financial extinction. Perhaps it is only a case of using heated rhetoric for the purpose of inducing wealthy laymen to open their cheque-books in order to alleviate such a sad and distressing state of affairs. The whole thing is far too reminiscent of the biting words of Iago in Shakespeare's *Othello*: "Thus do I make my fool my purse!" For, in the last analysis, religion is but a trade, and a sorry one, and is no more honest than fortune-telling, which it so closely resembles. The fortune-teller foretells a handsome husband, or success in business; and the priest promises the glories of a golden heaven; and both receive payment for their services. The one is as honest as the other, but not more so.

MIMNERMUS.

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## Right and Wrong

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"The nation's morals are like its teeth: the more decayed they are the more it hurts to touch them."

(Prefaces to *Bernard Shaw*, p. 434.)

"The goodness of men shows itself in time more powerful than the wickedness of some of their religions."

(W. K. Clifford, *Lectures and Essays*, p. 375.)

"Religion has no monopoly in matters of morality. Morality and religion are separate and distinct. Morality can and will survive long after all religious beliefs have decayed and disappeared."

(W. K. Wallace, *The Scientific World View*, p. 79.)

MANY people, especially among the older generation, fear that the decay of religion will involve the decay of morality; morals being, so they believe, so bound up with religion that both will fall together.

This view, once almost universal, we now know to be altogether wrong. Morals existed before religion, for the simple reason that no society, even the most primitive, could survive without some recognized rule of conduct, or code of Morals. Even the Apes and Chimpanzees refrain from murdering one another, and are as careful of their offspring as human beings. The religious apologist is capable of a great deal, but we doubt whether even he would claim that these creatures have religious ideas.

By the way, when the public are implored to subscribe to Foreign Missions, the heathen are depicted as grovelling in the most degrading and immoral superstitions. But when the religious apologist wishes to prove that religion is an instinct divinely implanted and always present; then these superstitions are made to do duty for primitive religious ideas!

Dealing with this question of the origin of morality in religion, Westermarck observes:—

It seems to me to be a fact not to be doubted that the moral consciousness has originated in emotions entirely different from that feeling of uncanniness and mystery which first led to the belief in supernatural beings. I can find no foundation whatever for the statements made by various writers, that "the historical beginning of all morality is to be found in religion."<sup>1</sup>

It may be asked: "What does it matter whether morality is connected with religion or not?" It matters a great deal; for, as an American sociologist points out: "The religious view assumes that God's morality is fixed and unchanging. History shows us that morality is, as a matter of fact, in continuous flux and change. As civilization advances, earlier moral notions become inadequate; a new moral code is necessary."<sup>2</sup>

But when a change is suggested there immediately arises a shout that religion is being attacked and God's commands set at naught. It is religion to-day that is offering the most strenuous opposition to Birth Control, even in the face of our two million unemployed, the vast majority of whom can never find employment again; to the alteration of our Divorce Law which denies relief on account of crime or lunacy; and to the movement for the sterilization of the unfit in order to improve the race.

The Catholics especially are foremost in this attack. By their constant bombardment of Members of Parliament with threats of withdrawing their support, they intimidate members into voting against these reforms, and the Catholic papers are always urging their readers on to political action. The Catholic Labour members in Parliament forced the Labour Party to drop Secular Education, although they formed but an insignificant proportion of the Party. As Wallace observes:—

The history of Christianity is filled with episodes which reveal that man's social purpose was held to be secondary and incidental to the chief aim of religious morality. Christianity has always disregarded social welfare when it comes into conflict with "the promotion of 'the power and glory of God.'" It is the will of God, not the welfare of mankind, that matters. This will often conflicts with the ethical ideals of social life, more especially when the religious hold over the imagination of men is beginning to show signs of decay.<sup>3</sup>

Morality owes nothing to religion. The claim that morality is the offspring of religion is false. As Prof. Clifford well said: "The most ancient version of the Ten Commandments, whatever the investigations of scholars may make it out to be, originates not in the thunders of Sinai, but in the peaceful life of men on the plains of Chaldea. Conscience is the voice of Man ingrained into our hearts, commanding us to work for Man."<sup>4</sup>

To the question why should we be moral at all? Clifford replies: "If I steal money from any person, there may be no harm done by the mere transfer of possession; he may not feel the loss, or it may prevent him from using the money badly. But I cannot help doing this great wrong towards Man, that I make myself dishonest. What hurts society is not that it should lose its property, but that it should become a den of thieves; for then it must cease to be society." Again, why should we speak the truth? Clifford replies:—

Habitual want of care about what I believe leads to habitual want of care in others about the truth of what is told to me. Men speak the truth to one another when each reveres the truth in his own mind and in the other's mind; but how shall my friend revere the truth in my mind when I myself am careless about it, when I believe things because I want to believe them, and because they are comforting and pleasant? Will he not learn to cry "Peace" to me, when there is no peace? By such a course I shall surround myself with a thick atmosphere of falsehood and fraud, and in that I must live. It may matter little to me, in my cloud-castle of sweet illusions and darling lies; but it matters much to Man that I have made my neighbours ready to deceive. The credulous man is father to the liar and the cheat; he lives in the bosom of this his family, and it is no marvel if he should become even as they are. (pp. 345-346.)

In conclusion, says Clifford: "Do I seem to say: 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die?' Far from it; on the contrary, I say: 'Let us take hands and help, for this day we are alive together.'" (p. 159.)

Morality, says Wallace: "is not something within us, which it is more or less fashionable to be ashamed of, that when we let it out walks about like a priggish and prudish Mrs. Grundy, thwarting our pleasures, checking our desires at every turn. On the contrary, if psychological considerations are taken into account, morality will no longer be confined to the respectable, but can even hope to become fashionable when it is more widely understood that in the scientific world view there is no inexorable law of good and evil, of truth and error."<sup>5</sup>

Morality varies with periods of time and geographical position. The morality which in some parts might be suitable for a shepherd tribe in a hot, thinly-populated country, is not at all suitable to people living in a temperate climate two thousand years later, even if it had a supernatural origin.

<sup>5</sup> W. K. Wallace: *The Scientific World View*, p. 211.

W. MANN.

## Catholic Piety and Peace

THE supplication of a divinity to do a job that would otherwise require human effort is bound to have a dangerous tendency to encourage those concerned to neglect their own responsibilities in the matter, especially if the task is difficult and unpleasant. Praying to prevent war is such an example. It is unlikely that the Catholic ex-Service-men, who gathered together at Lourdes from some twelve nations for this purpose, will be stimulated to a common investigation of the reasons why the present world is rapidly drifting towards world war. Yet the cause of peace would have been better served if they had discussed together why they happened to be fighting one another twenty years ago, and what they could do to prevent that happening again. They might have considered, for example, the attitude of their fellow religionists towards the entry of Soviet Russia into the League of Nations, in order to appreciate the contribution towards peace or war of the institution that was organizing their prayers at Lourdes.

It was noticeable that the opposition to the admission of Russia to the League was led by representatives from countries with Catholic Governments, particularly Switzerland and Belgium. Moreover, in reporting the matter in this country the *Catholic Times* wrote:—

<sup>1</sup> Westermarck: *The Goodness of Gods*, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> W. K. Wallace: *The Scientific World View*, p. 80.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 85.

<sup>4</sup> W. K. Clifford: *Lectures and Essays*, p. 384.

M. Motta, the Catholic spokesman of Switzerland, uttered words of condemnation that will be re-echoed by Catholics the world over.

And in the same paper, editorial comment ended with the words:—

On the question of the League and the Soviet we are entirely Swiss in sentiment.

In the first place, the general nature of the reasons advanced by M. Motta for opposing Russia's admission deserves consideration. Soviet Communism "was the most radical negation of their vital existence"; that was the text of his speech. In other words he dealt exclusively with the features of the Soviet State with which he and his Government disagreed. If this is to become a precedent, the hope of ever developing even the rudiments of international law may well be abandoned. At the present time it will certainly be impossible for the different States to come to any sound agreement as to how their mutual relationships are to be determined, if they are each to claim the right to make such an agreement dependent on their opinion of the internal affairs of the other States. On the relevant issue, namely Russia's foreign policy, M. Motta and the other representatives that supported him were strangely silent. Is that perhaps because they are aware that the reports of all Geneva discussions in recent years bear practical witness that the Soviet Government of all Governments has shown the greatest will to peace?

The remarks of M. Motta in dealing with the Russian Government as "an enemy of religion" were also illuminating. Here before the world, with Litvinov in a position to answer false accusations, all that he had to say apart from the platitude that Communism combats religion, was that "all servants of religion and their families are deprived of food cards, while Churches are abandoned and have been allowed to fall into ruin." A consideration of whether, and how far, this constitutes "persecution" would lead us into another subject. It is sufficient at this juncture to emphasize the vast difference between this statement and the wild stories which are published regularly by the Catholic press in England, and probably internationally, on conditions in Soviet Russia; although there is every reason to assume that M. Motta wished to state the strongest possible case against what for him is an "enemy" Government. In the issue of the *Catholic Times*, reporting M. Motta's speech, the Editor speaks of "anti-God Russia, where the profession of religion has become a crime punished by starvation to death." Or, to give one other example of stories told by Catholic propagandists in order to stir up the "flock" in this country, here is an extract from a speech of Fr. Owen Dudley, S.J., taken from a report in the *London Catholic Herald* (October 22, 1932):—

Priests were buried alive, thrown into quicklime, cut to pieces, frozen under ice, crucified.

It is not difficult to understand why Cardinal Bourne once told an audience at Watford Catholic Church:—

Do not believe that anything you read about Russia is exaggerated or short of the truth.

(*Manchester Guardian*, October 10, 1931.)

The Holy Father has been silent on the acts of his influential children in opposing Russia's admission to the League, and we are left to form our conclusions as to the extent to which direct clerical influence has played a part in determining their attitude.

Contrast the attitude of the Vatican towards the Soviet Government with its attitude towards the Hitler Régime in Germany! Certainly no Catholic paper or Catholic Government protested against a

Hitler Germany remaining a member of the League, although its Government was violating all its obligations in order to make military as well as ideological preparations for war. They were equally silent when Hitler brought Germany out of the League in order to be freed completely from any obligations which might hinder his ambitions in foreign policy. In spite even of the shooting of prominent Catholic leaders in Germany during the June murders, the various indignities which have been thrust on the Church, and the threats which are being made by Hitler's prominent supporters, such as Alfred Rosenberg and Bishop Mueller, the Vatican refuses to condemn in plain terms the action of the Nazi Government.

Similarly, let us consider the Vatican's attitude towards Italy. Consequent upon Mussolini's order for the militarization of all Italian children, "Atergo," in the *Sunday Referee*, raises the very pertinent question: What is Italy doing in the League of Nations? He writes with truth:—

A friend who has recently returned from Italy tells me that he heard children, dressed in semi-military uniform, singing the following "school" song:—

"We have our shining dagger,  
And its point is kept very sharp.  
The Austrians have tasted it;  
The French will taste it next."

What is the good of talking peace when criminal lunatics who foster this sort of thing are permitted to take a part in the counsels of nations?

There is little likelihood of the Holy Father protesting against Italy's membership of the League, however. He has yet to protest against the militarization of the young in that country. His remarks have so far been confined to emphasizing the need for "spiritual" education (i.e., Catholic) to balance the "national" (i.e., Mussolini) education of the children. It would indeed be difficult for the Catholic Church to declare its opposition to the politics of Mussolini when Cardinal Gasparri has declared on behalf of the Pope:—

Mussolini is the man who saw first clearly in the present world chaos. He is now endeavouring to place the heavy Government machinery on its right track, namely, to have it work in accordance with the moral laws of God.—(*Daily Herald*, September 15, 1932.)

Undoubtedly the Catholic Church would like a peaceful world in which to continue its development. But primarily it considers its power in determining policy; in this it does not differ from any other Government. Wherever the interests of peace are in conflict with *their* interests, it is always peace that is sacrificed.

In answer to the question, why the Pope did not use the enormous power that he had in 1914, with nearly half the European population Catholic, to stop the conflict that ensued, the Catholics usual reply is: The rulers would not have heeded him! He had not sufficient power! This does not explain why he did not attempt to use his influence to stop the war, why he refused to assign the blame to any Government or institution, why he allowed the Catholic press and priests in each of the belligerent countries to support their Government without restraint. The only possible explanation is that although the Pope might have been willing to stop the war if he could have been sure that the Powers would have heeded his word, he was unwilling to risk a conflict with any one of them, or all, in the interests of peace. This was the reality behind all the eloquent encyclicals of Benedict XV. appealing for the cessation of hostilities.

A parallel and more recent instance was afforded in 1932, when Japan had launched its savage attack on China. Dr. Yen, head of the Chinese delegation at Geneva, appealed to the Pope to utter a word in favour of his people. The Catholic Church, we are told, is opposed to unjust wars, and it would be difficult to find any justice in the plans of the Japanese militarists. All that the Cardinal Secretary of State telegraphed in reply was:—

... The Holy Father, whose universal paternity embraces all nations, and who has given many proofs of benevolence to the Chinese people, sends his sincerest wishes that peace may soon be restored between the two great and neighbouring countries.—  
(*Times*, February 16, 1932.)

This answer was not calculated to endanger Catholic advance in Japan.

The conflicts that ensue in the Fascist countries of Europe between the Catholic Church and the State, are solely a result of a struggle for power between rival forces both striving for world hegemony.

World peace can only be attained permanently, when might is placed in the service of right in international affairs. The activities of the Catholic Church, stripped of their pious pretences, are but a naked striving for might, to which everything, including right, must be sacrificed.

ALLAN FLANDERS.

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## Religion Without Churches?

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THE ecclesiastical leaders are at their wits' end to find new ways and means of retaining their authority over the minds of the mass of the people. The devices resorted to for this end are varied. They are often characterized by indiscretion and even folly. It would be interesting to know, for instance, what fee was marked on the brief of M. Motta of Switzerland, who made such a scandalous attack upon Russia in a fiery speech against the admission of that great power to the League of Nations. But despite M. Motta's religious fervour, and his uncompromising advocacy as the representative of the Christian Churches, the League showed good sense by admitting Russia to the League by a majority of thirty-eight to three, greatly to the chagrin of many Christian believers in this country, who hate Russia and everything Russian with a characteristically bitter and bigoted Christian hatred, as is evidenced by a large number of effusions in British papers. For this relief much thanks!

Another contemptible attempt to preserve ecclesiastical authority is the propagandist novel. Even such a generally popular and capable writer as George A. Birmingham did not consider the adoption of this method as beneath him. In his novel, *Wild Justice*, he sought to impress the British people with the horrific methods adopted by the Republicans in Southern Ireland. The medium of fiction is a peculiarly subtle and insidious means of twisting the minds of semi-illiterate and unintelligent people. Russia has been the victim of much lurid misrepresentation by Christian novelists and pressmen. Freethought has its hopes fixed in an increased knowledge and an impartial system of education; and it need not but be gratified by the conflict that is evidently going on in Europe between Rome and Protestantism. The more enlightened Protestants cannot too long defer their decision as to what position they are to take up. Inevitably in the near future they must choose between Rome and Rational Humanism. The grip of myth

and fiction is relaxing, and the reign of Truth and Realism is coming in.

A great many Protestants in the twentieth century seek to console themselves with the reflection that although so many people are deserting the Churches, these deserters have not lost their instinctive sense of and belief in the religion of Jesus Christ. It is merely a renewal of the old cry of the nineteenth century that Churchianity is not Christianity! Well nobody, certainly no Freethinker, would for one moment ask for the imposition of any embargo upon anyone thinking or believing whatever he chooses, or upon the expression of his thought or belief. But what is the Christian Religion going to be without its Churches? Though the pews are gradually thinning the ecclesiastical authorities everywhere are speeding up the erection of more and more Churches and Mission Halls in the suburban areas which are extending under the new housing schemes. The majority of people who live in the new areas are not particularly enthusiastic about more new Churches and Mission Halls. They do not ask for them. But the ecclesiastics themselves say they must have them for the sake of their spiritual health and eternal welfare. And the cowed dwellers in the suburban areas dare not, for the sake of their work which provides for the material sustenance of themselves and their families, raise any voice against this foolish expenditure of money on unwanted ecclesiastical buildings; and when the clerical hat is passed round, they drop in their contributions, following the example of their bosses, whose big cheques are flaunted in the press. What a farce it is! How the black-coated, dog-collared gentry have the common people on a string! How by veiled menaces and unwarranted promises they still gull the mob and keep them under!

More than one half of the hopes of Freethinkers would be realized if the bulk of Christian believers could be satisfied with a religion without Churches. Then the ecclesiastical structures throughout the country could be converted into institutions of use and advantage and benefit to the general population. We are spending, unjustifiably at present, enormous sums on new school-buildings. There is a clamant need for new hospitals. A great economy could be effected if ecclesiastical buildings were adapted to secular purposes beneficial to all in the here and now instead of being utilized only on one day of the week for the adulation of a supposititious supernatural being, who has given no proof of his existence, far less of the possession of any qualification to run the world on just and reasonable lines.

But the Churches are fortified by cash, and until fear and ignorance have been overcome, and a period of sane thinking entered upon, the Churches will continue to exist, however attenuated the congregations, and however formal and unmeaning the ritual. It is our part to prove to demonstration that clericalism has always been, and is to-day an imposture, a despotism, and a curse. The lies it disseminates are only one part of the hindrance to emancipation and the possession of real freedom by the peoples of the earth. Equally disastrous is the participation of clerics in the governance of any nation with all the implied and impudent assumptions thereof.

IGNORUS.

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The intellectual light of Europe is not only due to great luminaries whom everyone can name, but to millions of thoughtful persons, now utterly forgotten, who in their time loved the light, and guarded it and increased it, and carried it into many lands, and bequeathed it as a sacred trust.

Philip Gilbert Hamerton.

## Acid Drops

As is to be expected from one's knowledge of the British press, everything was said in connexion with the shooting of King Alexander, save the one thing that ought to have been said. When a King or anyone else sets up a dictatorship and so denies a people the right to criticism and the power to modify existing laws and institutions, he is proclaiming his belief in the rule of naked force. In such cases there is only one answer to it, and that is force. The executioner and jailer in the service of the dictator has to be met with the bullet of the revolutionist. The dictator himself makes any other response impossible. Force is met by force, and it is sheer humbug for those who proclaim their faith in force to cry out whenever they find it used against them. A dictator should at least have the courage and decency to play the game, and those who believe in it might also recognize the significance of these displays of force, on both sides, and consider how many are flirting with the idea of a dictatorship in this country.

Things must be very bad when the Bishop of Chelmsford is forced to admit as a "plain fact" that "a very large proportion of the population of to-day are entirely estranged from organized religion of all kinds." Of course, there is the saving clause that it is "organized," to explain the falling off, but it perhaps never occurred to the Bishop that if faith in religion had not depended on "organization," then religion would not have lost so many of its supporters. Or, perhaps this thought did occur to the Bishop, but he considered it best not to mention it.

The Archdeacon of Cornwall complains that when a "Modernist" Christian admits the divinity of Christ, he only admits a divinity of moral excellence. Jesus, he complains is the Son of God, but not God the Son, "the figure becomes dim and fades into the conception of a great moral teacher." Unfortunately it is not only the Modernist who tries to play this trick upon the public. It is almost general among the better-educated Christians, and is not unknown to a certain type of "reverent Agnostic." And we are willing to wager that when the Archdeacon of Cornwall is dealing with a general public and trying to induce them to believe in Jesus, it is the "great moral teacher" he stresses and not the God. We agree that you cannot make Jesus Christ the pivot of a religion unless he is made to be a God; on the other hand you cannot get a modern civilized audience to accept the idea of a God-man. So there it is. The only thing of use to Christianity is the man who was God, and the only thing people are likely to swallow is the great moral teacher. And one is just as absurd as the other.

Mr. Owen Rutter, the novelist, has just published a book dealing with the problems concerned in bringing up one's children in the modern way. He has, of course, little use for the old Victorian methods—and in this he is in the company of most modern parents. But the question of religion seems to worry him mostly. He recognizes that the Christian stories of miracles, the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection, and a crucified Saviour simply will not do. But, he says, "young people have a right to inherit something firmer than Agnosticism. They need a constructive affirmation of truth, not its denial." We quite agree; truth should be taught, but is placing Christianity before children as indisputably true, playing the game? At all events, Mr. Rutter told his young daughter, "as to the truth of the Gospel records, people must decide that for themselves." We wish all parents would leave that question open till their children did decide for themselves. The decision in most cases would be a sorry blow for Christianity.

It is good news to learn that plans are being drawn up by the Roman Catholic Hierarchy in America for the classification of films into good, doubtful and condemned. The film magnates will be so pleased at putting the

whole question into the hands of the Holy Church, which will supply committees of priests to decide whether a film should or should not be released. Cardinal Mundelein, of Chicago, who has come into the limelight on the matter, and who looks like being the "Big Boss" of the films, thinks that the whole of the film industry in Europe should also allow the Church to decide what is or is not a good film. But why restrict the censorship to films? What about books and plays and pictures? Why shouldn't priests be called in to decide upon *everything*? After all, in theory the Church is all-embracing, and no one can deny its gradual advance in practice. What a jolly world this would be if only it were entirely controlled by priests!

Last week, at Buenos Aires, there took place the Thirty-Second International Eucharistic Congress. Hundreds of thousands of women received Holy Communion—this really means grovelled in front of a priest and an altar—and a million people at least took part in the proceedings. A large number of Cardinals graced the Congress with their Holy Presence, and hundreds of priests officiated—particularly on "Children's Day," when 60,000 children sung at Mass. The Congress ended with "an immense procession of the Blessed Sacrament." We call attention to all this with an object, namely, to show that religion is *not* dead. On the contrary, it is very much alive; and those people who imagine that Free-thought propaganda is no longer necessary, or that attention should be exclusively fixed on the economic question will, be able, we hope, to see why it is alive. The Roman Catholic Church is not merely one of the most powerful, and one of the richest organizations in the world; it is also one of the most cunning. The staging of these "Eucharistic Conferences" with their immense processions of Cardinals, priests, men, women and children, with their Masses and Holy Communions and solemn music, shows a marvellous knowledge of the way in which the ignorance and fear of human nature can be played upon. *Verb. sap.*

Canon Marshall of Cambridge, one of the pilgrims to the recent Lourdes Peace Celebration, had a bad collapse there. He was promptly sent back to Royston and is, we are pleased to note, gradually recuperating. This is one of the cases which Lourdes enthusiasts will not quote. But, in spite of that, we are still puzzled why the Canon was not dipped into the Holy Water and cured at once? Is Lourdes losing its miraculous power?

A "West-End Vicar" writes in the *Church Times*, that when he visits the houses of his parishioners, he is told by the footman, "Not at home." This is not because they do not like him, as he has only just entered into office and they do not know him. He says it is because eighty-per-cent of the people never entered Church, and they are afraid of being roped in. And he asks, "What is to be done?" We suggest that the best policy would be to leave these people alone. The day has gone by when grown up men and women considered it necessary for a parson to call on them and attend to their religious and moral needs. That is a belief that belongs to the day of the full-fledged medicine-man. Today it is an impertinence for a parson, in many cases neither as well-educated nor as intelligent as the people on whom he calls, to visit, uncalled, and take on the task of official instructor. That the vast majority of clergymen are quite unfit to act as instructors in the case of anything connected with this world is quite clear, and this is hardly a good reason for placing reliance upon whatever instruction they may give concerning the next.

On October 10, at the Westminster Police Court, George William Pitman, was charged with punching a police officer in the jaw outside the Fascist headquarters. The policeman was in a car, and drew up outside the Fascist building. Whereupon Pitman came up and asked him why he wanted to draw up there and gave the policeman a "violent blow on the jaw." When Pitman discovered his mistake he apologized, and as the police-car had no special mark, and a conviction might count against Pitman in the future, the case was dis-

missed on payment of costs. It looks as if it may be taken for granted that, if any civilian draws up his car outside the Fascist headquarters and a Fascist punches him on the jaw, it will be quite all right. We wonder whether the magistrate is under the impression that the Fascists have control of the streets outside and round about their headquarters. In that case we suggest that a notice should be exhibited, "Cars will only be allowed to pull up, and pedestrians to loiter within five hundred yards of the Fascist headquarters by permission of Sir Oswald Mosley." And, of course, the same principle would apply to the headquarters of all anti-Fascist organizations. (?)

It is always amusing to hear about "Christian happiness." The Rev. F. L. Wiseman, preaching in Manchester Central Hall, proclaimed that "the medieval conception of a pale, sorrowing, emaciated Christ is not the real Jesus." How does Mr. Wiseman know better than the old monks? Apparently this up-to-date preacher bases his misconception on the words of Jesus, which he quotes: "Thac My joy might be in you" (John xv. 11). Mr. Wiseman ignores the fact that in the same discourse Jesus assured His disciples that "the world will hate you," and that "in the world ye shall have tribulation." Clearly this "joy" was either sheer humbug, or it was to be postponed until after death. The "joy" of Jesus is like the "peace" of God: it "passeth all understanding."

The Rev. Hector Stafford, a St. Albans Minister, is a sceptic of sceptics. "I cannot believe," he says, "I cannot for the life of me believe there is such a thing as an Atheist, I can't, really." Like Alice in Wonderland, anything he says three times is bound to be true. We suggest that this "blind believer" should ask the N.S.S. to send a live Atheist to explain to this benighted Church what Atheism is. The congregation would find, in all probability that they are Atheists too, in the sense that at least ninety-nine per cent of their daily life is only possible by acting on the assumption that either God does not exist, or, if he exists, he does nothing.

Dr. Eric Waterhouse asks in the *Methodist Recorder*, "Why Worry About Sin?" He thinks that, "If we can find the right place for God in life, there will be no place for sin." It looks easy. But what exactly is the "right place for God?" Dr. Waterhouse claims that "the present age is not Atheistic, it is not Agnostic at heart, but it has not yet found its relation to God." It must seem a queer world to those who believe that Omnipotence is incapable of impressing its own creation with the most elementary "facts" of its own relationship with its creator.

A "Group" meeting was held last week in Grimsby (George Street Chapel) "to discover the kind of world God wants us to help Him build." Surely God, King of Kings, Lords of Lords, creator of worlds, could somehow toddle along without George Street Chapel, Grimsby, having to "help Him." There is some subtle joke lurking somewhere, if "God wants us to help Him build" something, but has to depend on a "group" meeting in Grimsby to "discover" the building plans and general idea of what sort of "building" He "wants us" to help Him build.

The ridiculous but popular religious phrase, "The Ministry of Suffering" is the subject of an address by William Jack, L.L.B. The phrase is traceable to the text "Made perfect through suffering," and as all Christians are "perfect even as their Father in Heaven," they must for this reason, if for no other, pretend that they enjoy being miserable. Mr. Jack professes to find in the suffering of human mothers (which he says is greater than that of lower animals in reproduction), a proof that "the higher we ascend the greater the suffering." This is an argument which will not bear a moment's consideration. Elimination or reduction of pain is as truly an "upward" tendency as the reduction of the mortality rate. To glorify suffering is not a sign of civilization, but the sentiment of a savage.

Professor J. A. Findlay, writing about the Sabbath, has to answer the difficult question as to how far God Almighty is Himself a Sabbath-Breaker? All the machinery of "creation" apparently goes on seven days a week, and even a Scotch Elder's eye can scarcely discern any slackening down on Sunday—a day which seems to get a fair share of whatever storms or heat-waves are about. Jesus also is accused: "We cannot help feeling that Jesus went out of His way," says the Professor, "to do His works of healing, on the Sabbath Day." The National Sunday League ought to feel encouraged now that they know of two members of the Holy Trinity who believed in Sabbath Breaking.

We learn from the *British Weekly*, that at Corby, near Kettering, a Holy War is raging. A well-known firm of Engineers is opening up at Corby, bringing many of their Scotch employees with them. Naturally the Scotch Presbyterians want to run a new church there for these newcomers, who ought to be Presbyterians, if they are not. But the Congregationalists boast that they "have been in the Corby area for a hundred years," and are determined to build a new church there immediately. The Rev. Leonard Wide, of Kettering, says "The religious scramble has begun: already nine different bodies in addition to the Anglican and Roman Catholics, are contemplating opening up." "Wheresoever the carcase is."

We hope the Rev. Albert Belden will not give up his regular habit of providing the world with amusement. His latest contribution to our entertainment is to describe the prophet Jeremiah as "A Pacifist before Christ." "Before Christ" seems to imply that He who "came not to bring peace but a sword" was Himself a Pacifist. As for Jeremiah, this is the spirit of his "pacifism"; "Therefore deliver up their children to the famine, and pour out their blood by the force of the sword; and let their wives be bereaved of their children, and be widows; and let their men be put to death" (Jer. xviii. 21). Verses 8-10 in the same chapter prove Jeremiah to have been as much a "pacifist" as the Bishop of London.

A "Stubborn Old Scotsman" writes to the *Christian World*: "I simply cannot believe that Jesus, who taught us to love our enemies, could ever possibly have told me to hate my father and mother" (Luke xiv. 26). Yes, but isn't it just as reasonable to doubt if the man who told us the second, could also have told us the first of these contradictory "good news" items. The Rev. John Bevan is good enough to explain to the Scotsman, "what, I am sure, Jesus really stood for," and anyhow "this injunction of Our Lord has little or no application to-day." The latter is obviously correct.

### Fifty Years Ago

DR. PARKER warns his brethren not to let Sceptics "come in the night-time and take away the morality which would have had no existence but for the theology which is denied." In the same strain he says that they "must not allow Christian morality to be baptized into a new name, or revealed commandments to be palmed off as modern inventions." Modern inventions for-sooth! Dr. Parker must be presuming on the ignorance of his hearers. Surely the least reflection might assure the most pious believer in revelation that, even without it, men could not have existed all this time without having discovered those primary rules of morality, or in other words, of social health, with which the Decalogue deals. And surely Dr. Parker must be aware that the laws of public and domestic morality were well observed in Egypt, Syria and India, to say nothing of other countries, while the Jews were a horde of degraded slaves or barbaric freebooters; and ages before their tribal deity is alleged to have given their leader Moses a few commandments to keep them from plundering and murdering each other.

The "Freethinker," October 19, 1884.



# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL:

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No. : CENTRAL 2412

## TO CORRESPONDENTS

E. M. GODDARD.—There is no doubt whatever that Heine completely repudiated both Judaism and Christianity and never weakened in this. Towards the end of his life it is said that he began to use the term "God," but referring to his long illness he said this might be a consequence of morphia and poultices. This was again indicated by his famous *mot* that if he could get out on crutches he would go to church, adding "Where else should a man go to on crutches; is not Christianity a capital religion—for cripples?"

J. STEPHENS.—Thanks for excerpt from Max Nordau. We are pleased to have your appreciation for the articles on "Chasing Shadows."

S. HUTCHINS.—We are glad to know that our examination of the "Thing-in-itself" has cleared up what has hitherto puzzled you. The only secret of clearing up such puzzles is to restate and look at the subject again, and it requires no astonishing ability to do that—merely a dash of common-sense, and to realize that a ridiculous statement cannot be made sensible by being dressed up in capital letters and sonorous phrases. One day Mr. Cohen, if he has time, may adopt your suggestion and write a series of short articles on general philosophy—when he has time.

A. HEPWORTH.—Thanks, but you have omitted to give the name of the Council.

B. F. O'CONNELL.—Three copies of the *Freethinker* are being sent to the Middlesbrough Libraries, thanks for your keen interest.

LADY SIMON.—Copies of the *Freethinker* sent as requested.

J. GORDON DENISON.—Thanks for cuttings.

F. LOMAS.—Paper being sent for four weeks to address given, your help much appreciated.

E. D. JONES.—Thanks for your complimentary letter. Pleased we have managed to throw light in dark places.

G. V. BURNHAM (Birkenhead)—You must remember that a Freethought platform is not a Church pulpit, and a Freethought audience must allow for differences of opinion between it and the speaker. A speaker can never give of his best if he has always in mind the consideration of whether those listening are pleased or not with what he says.

S. G. PETERS.—We publish, gratuitously, lecture announcements for Freethought Societies, but we have not the space to do this for all societies indiscriminately.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—V. Murray, £1.

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## Sugar Plums

The B.B.C. announced as part of its programme for October 10, a reading from Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*. The reading was to last but a few minutes, but it was too much to give such prominence to the author of the *Age of Reason*. So without any explanation the reading was deleted, and another reading substituted. We are not surprised at the deletion, we were surprised when we saw Paine's name included in the programme. But the incident gives a rather satirical significance to the speech that was arranged in connexion with the

Bradlaugh centenary, in which it was coolly remarked that the fight that Bradlaugh fought was quite out of date. It could not ignore Bradlaugh, but it could belittle a continuation of Bradlaugh's struggle. The deletion of Paine's name from the programme throws light on much.

The protests against this autocratic censorship of the B.B.C. have become very numerous since we initiated the agitation, and we hope this will gain in intensity before the charter of the Corporation is renewed. And once again we would point out that if those public men and women who are invited to broadcast were to insist on absolute freedom of expression, the B.B.C. would have to either relax its censorship or label itself publicly as an instrument for the control of thought and the suppression of opinion. But so long as men and women, for the sake of a few guineas and a little publicity are willing to sink their independence and their freedom, the B.B.C. with its clerical rule will continue as it has been doing. We do not see that these men and women who submit, and to that extent support the censorship of the B.B.C. have any real ground for protesting against the suppression of free speech in Germany, and the Government's Sedition Bill. After all the B.B.C. and the Government are doing what they can to follow the German example. And Rome was not built in a day.

Mr. Cohen opened the winter season of the Manchester Branch on Sunday last in the Co-operative Hall, Ardwick. The audience was not quite so large as the previous meetings have been, but that may have been due to the weather, and the fact that the hall itself is not in so good a public position. But there was no mistaking the interest in the address, and there were a number of questions and a little—for once in a way—relevant opposition. Mr. S. Cohen occupied the chair, and made a strong appeal for local support. The usual Sunday evening meetings will be carried on at the Clarion Café.

On Sunday next, October 28, Mr. Cohen will lecture in the McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow at 7.0 On Monday evening he will take part in a discussion with the Rev. J. Levine in the Berkeley Hall, on the subject, "Is the Belief in God Reasonable?" On the occasion of the last debate Mr. Cohen had in Glasgow the police were required to deal with the crowd that were unable to find room in the hall. So we advise those who wish to attend to secure their seats early. Full particulars will be found on the back page of this issue.

It is stated that the Government may, in view of the agitation throughout the country, modify the scope of the Incitement to Sedition Bill. We trust that this announcement will not be taken as an indication that the agitation against it may be relaxed. It is its withdrawal, not its modification that is required, and if the agitation is kept going this may be accomplished. It is one of the most serious moves towards the imposition of an intolerable censorship that has been attempted for a long time.

The *Freethinker* is now exhibited for reading in the three public libraries in Middlesbrough. It is supplied free from this office. Of course, we would rather people bought the paper for themselves, but whether it is bought and read, or merely read, it is doing its work. We send the paper to quite a number of public libraries now, and are ready to send it to every public library in the country if they will take it.

We publish elsewhere in this issue a letter from the Rev. Walter Wynn, replying to our "Views and Opinions" for September 30. The letter cannot be answered in a few lines, and as space is not available in this issue, Mr. Cohen will deal with the reply next week.

At the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, on Tuesday evening, October 23, there will be a debate between Mr. H. W. Armstrong, representing the Secular Education League, and Miss K. M. Penzer, representing the "Association of Teachers of Religious Knowledge," on the subject "That Education in State-aided schools should be confined to Secular Subjects." Admission will be one shilling, and the discussion commences at 7 o'clock. It is not often that there is a public discussion on this subject, and we strongly urge London Freethinkers to attend and take a religious friend along with them. The subject is just now of great importance, in view of the general endeavour to place a stronger dose of religion in the schools, and the desire of the Government to give as much help as it decently can in public, and indecently in private.

Mr. H. G. Wells's autobiography is interesting as the story of any Freethinker's intellectual development is bound to be. His early years, when he "taught Scripture on Sunday afternoons," and attended a Calvinistic Methodist service, and acted as teacher in a Methodist "College," throw a very revealing light on Mr. Wells's subsequent intellectual life. Perhaps if he had never had these early contacts with Christianity he might have treated religion with less respect than some of his later utterances imply. It is difficult to understand how anyone emancipated from orthodoxy could commit himself to the extraordinary eulogy of Christ contained in Chapter 37 of *A Short History of the World*.

We are asked to announce that Mr. George Bedborough will open a discussion on "Armaments" at the Hampshire House Club, Hammersmith, to-day (Sunday), at 11 a.m. The nearest station is Ravenscourt Park.

We are pleased to learn that the discussion between Mr. Ailan Flanders and the Rev. W. Reid at Middlesbrough was a complete success. There was a good attendance, both debaters conducted their cases with courtesy, and the audience behaved as an audience should. We feel certain that the discussion will have helped the Freethought cause considerably.

The Liverpool Branch led off with its ordinary Sunday meetings in fine style on Sunday last. The hall was quite filled, and there were many newcomers among the audience.

## Chasing Shadows

(Concluded from p. 651.)

If I have succeeded in exposing the superstition that the things we know by such names as "matter" or "mind" or "existence," are not *real*, but are only "modes" of an unknowable "reality," one of the main purposes of these articles will have been accomplished. This curious superstition has been common with both Atheists and Theists, with Idealists and Materialists, and is nothing more than survival of the ghost-soul of the primitive savage. It has been necessary to spend so much time in discussing it, because so long as this primitive notion is allowed to find a lodgment in modern science and philosophy, so long shall we continue to witness the perpetuation of beliefs which without their scientific disguise would soon be recognized for what they are.

Only here and there is it clearly seen that much of what passes for scientific instruction, even when given by reputable scientists, is sadly lacking in an appreciation of the nature of scientific method, with the result that the general public is little better protected than was the public of three centuries ago against superstition dressed up as science. This makes

one acknowledge the more gratefully the following from a lecturer on science in Columbia University:—

From the humanistic as well as from the purely intellectual point of view, in fact, the general acquisition of scientific knowledge is of far less consequence than the inculcation of the scientific habit of thought. The productive natural scientist has done little to impart to the people at large the living spirit which animates his labours, the instinctive philosophy that guides, or the methods which make it effective; and the theorists who venture most persuasively to repair his error of neglect are usually onlookers. . . . Their expositions have already accomplished much towards the general befuddlement of common thought concerning science; even more, one is inclined to believe than the entertaining misinformation which is disseminated as news. Between the Scylla of journalism and the Charybdis of transcendental metaphysics, the unskilled voyager in these troubled waters is now in a most unhappy situation; and it appears to be well worth while to offer him a little professional assistance.\*

I agree with this. It is what I have been trying to drive home for many years. The distressing reflection is that many of those whom I have had to criticize belong to that fairly large army of scientific workers who bulk largely in the public mind but whose own minds are full of shreds of superstition they ought to have discarded years ago. They know the products of the laboratory far better than they understand the significance of the methods they employ.

The other point I have been trying to make clear is the main theme of my *Materialism Restated*, and I must refer interested readers to that book for a more elaborate exposition. This theme is that the world we know, the *real* world, the world with which science and philosophy must deal, because they can deal with none other, is a world of experience. Whether we are concerned with the formation of stellar systems or the growth of cabbages, the formulation of a "law" of nature, or the chance of knocking down a prize in a coconut shy, whatever we are dealing with or thinking of, we can think of them only as a phase of experience. Experience shapes our ideas of what has been, it gives us our cognition and re-cognition of what is, it determines our expectations of what must be.

The human mind cannot get outside or beyond this world of experience. The moment we attempt to do so, we discover that we are forsaking the conditions that make thought possible, and our speech becomes a mere babbling—worse than an idiot's tale, for the idiot does utter something intelligible, but the man who talks of some-thing beyond experience has made "thing" unintelligible. He is asking us to think what the smell of a colour would be like if it did not make a sound.

Let anyone who wishes to study the philosophy of science, and not merely fill his head with the not very valuable knowledge about the age of the earth, or the distance of the stars—information that one may well leave on one's bookshelves to consult when necessary—get the fact into his head that all we know or can think of ever knowing is based on experience, and he will save himself from many pitfalls. And along with that let him get hold of two other things.

The first is that all thinking, all cognition, and re-cognition, must be expressed in terms of likeness and difference. A "this" is known only because there is a "that"; there is an "up" only because there is a "down," and so forth. A thing can only be thought of as like some things and unlike others. That is why this talk—so fashionable to-day—of absolute values is so much absolute nonsense. There can be

\* *The Scientific Habit of Thought* (1927) by Professor F. Barry, pp. vi-vii.

no value save in terms of some concrete good or some concrete utility, and when even the good or the utility cannot be clearly indicated, then we fall back upon that experience which leads us to conclude that following one line is more likely to lead to serviceable results than following another line.

The second thing to bear in mind follows from our starting point that our world is a world of experience. Some experience must lie at the foundation of all we think or believe. The experience may be distorted as when a cloud in the sky is mistaken, say, for a witch travelling on a broomstick, or misunderstood, as when the religious moralist talks of "conscience" as the voice of God, or as when Martin Luther interprets a pain in the head as the work of the devil trying to drive him insane; but some experience must be there. That is why I have so repeatedly insisted that there must be some genuinely scientific meaning in such words as "matter" and "mind," "objective" and "subjective," etc. Even a delusion has its aspect of "reality," and exists as one of those "facts" with which science must deal and explain.

It is the function of science to enable us to find our way about the world by providing us with so many sketch maps of the territory that forms the subject matter of scientific study. It does this by taking one great group of experiences—feelings, ideas, things that are peculiar to "me"—and calls that a world of mind. It takes another great group of things that show resistance and mass and persistence, and labels that a world of "matter"—neither of these terms stand for a "thing-in-itself"—they are labels attached to the two great divisions of human experience. And step by step it goes on arranging experiences in distinct classes—categories, and creating "laws" which accurately describe the behaviour of the things within that class. That is the reason why we have laws of physics, laws of chemistry, laws of biology, laws of psychology and so forth. I have no time to elaborate this now, but I will take one example out of many that might be taken, the better to illustrate my meaning. It will also help to show the gross fallacy of those who argue that if Materialism be true then everything should ultimately be explainable in terms of physics and chemistry, and the foolishness of those who accept the statement and try to justify it.

In a very excellent little book by Professor J. B. S. Haldane (*Fact and Faith*, Watts & Co., 1s.) in the course of a chapter on "Some Reflections on Materialism," I find the statement that "the main task of biology is to explain the fact that living creatures obey laws that cannot be predicted from our present knowledge of physics." Professor Haldane says that he is not a Materialist, and so, presumably he regards our inability to predict how living creatures will act on the basis of our knowledge of physics as an objection to Materialism. All I can say is that Professor Haldane, in spite of his well-earned reputation as a brilliant scientist shows himself, in this passage, curiously forgetful of a true philosophy of science.

In the first place, can we predict in any case, from a knowledge of two or more factors what will be the product? It is quite true that we know that, say, wetness is the product of H<sub>2</sub>O. But this is something that follows experience; we could never have predicted it from any knowledge of the factors that go to produce water. That is true all round. In an act of true causation, we know what will result from the cause, because we have seen what does result, but the power of prediction does not come from a knowledge of the power of the cause, it follows the manifestation of the effect.

Second, if we could predict the behaviour of living creatures from a knowledge of physics, what need is there of laws of biology, save at best to serve as a temporary convenience? If Professor Haldane considers the matter he will surely realize that it is precisely because the behaviour of living creatures present features that are not present in either physical or chemical phenomena that it is necessary to frame laws of biology, just as it is the rise—the emergence—of still newer features that indicate the inadequacy of biological laws and lead to the creation of laws of psychology. There is really nothing to explain in the fact noted by Professor Haldane. The difficulty exists only to those who have an inadequate conception of the nature of scientific "laws" and a faulty conception of the nature of causation.

There is a similar curious statement by Professor Haldane that "if my opinions are the result of the chemical processes going on in my brain they are determined by the laws of chemistry, not those of logic." There is a strange confusion here which would take a long while thoroughly to disentangle. All I will say now is that just as we have to express a complex of physical and chemical forces in terms of biology, so we have to express the complex of chemical activities of the brain in terms of reasoning and logic. There is nothing here that is stranger than is found at any stage of evolution; for the whole evolutionary process furnishes a continuous series of examples of the necessity for making new laws—that is, descriptions of different levels—as evolution advances from complexity to increasing complexity, and so attains new levels.

Hardly any of the difficulties I have been discussing would have existed had the human race started its existence with a perfect knowledge of itself and the world. But just as man's body is the slowly developed body of a long series of animal ancestors, so his mind has almost as lengthy a history behind it. Man has a tailed mind as well as a tailed body. The old thought-forms persist, they are enshrined in our language, our customs and our institutions. Neither the scientist nor the philosopher is completely immune from their influence, and the ordinary man and woman fall easy victims to them. Nor shall I be greatly surprised if some acute reader finds examples in myself of the evils I have denounced in others. If he does find this to be the case, I shall be delighted if I can feel that what I have written has to some extent helped him to make the discovery.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## On Credulity

AMONG the many qualities which accompany man throughout his career—love, loyalty, courage, stupidity and many others—not the least interesting and curious from the psychological standpoint is his credulity. Webster defines the word as "belief or readiness of belief; esp. a disposition to believe on slight or uncertain evidence; uncritical belief." Sir W. Hamilton goes a little further. He contends "that implicit credulity is the mark of a feeble mind, will not be disputed." A credulous person is, then, very ready to believe what he is inclined to believe; or he will believe readily without bothering too much on evidence. He can, indeed, be easily imposed upon, at least, so long as his particular credulity can be skillfully exploited.

Credulity is fostered mainly by fear and ignorance. Fear of the unknown, in particular, has given rise to extraordinary delusions on the part of man; and ignorance of causes and effects has been responsible for

the birth of all kinds of superstitions. History is not merely the record of man's struggles against injustice and poverty and disease. It is not merely the story of his kings, his wars, his discoveries. It is also an account of his almost incredible superstitions. There is not a nation or tribe known to anthropologists which has not enshrined in its history, customs and survivals based on downright credulity; that is, on hopeless fear and ignorance. The collections of these in such works as the *Golden Bough*, the *Mystic Rose*, and other famous books, give us a picture of the mind of man throughout the ages very difficult to believe were it not a fact that almost similar examples of credulity can be cited in our midst, enshrined in the minds of some of our greatest writers and men of science to-day.

It is difficult for us to get at the back of the mind of primitive man. To say that, collectively, he was grossly ignorant and superstitious, may be a general truism, but there must have been some division of intellect even in his day. There were fools and some who were not so foolish. There were the followers and the leaders; the food-gatherers and the people who planned—just as, in a way, there are now. Generally speaking, it is not difficult in a modern army of soldiers to find out who shows the ability to lead and teach, or who has to follow and learn.

Looking back through history, it is amazing to find how credulity was fostered and exploited. The leader, or the medicine-man, or the priest, had no difficulty in proving to the "herd" that he was in possession of a "secret doctrine." He could tell what the stars—or even God—would say. He was in direct communication with the Lord of Hosts; but he also could do things or divine things impossible for the "vulgar." Hence an atmosphere of "secret sciences," of witches and sorcerers, and demons, and of what are known as the Divinatory Arts, ranging from the mysteries of the Kabbalah to fortune-telling from playing cards.

The most extraordinary feature about the whole question is the fact that most people, from king to common labourer, had their lives dominated by the awe of the invisible world—that is, by fear of it—yet they seemed to like it. Even now many quite educated people cannot resist the temptation to have their hands read—especially if the palmist be young and pretty—or their "fortune" told by cards. The truth is that not only life, but the whole world was and is a riddle. "*Que sais-je?*" asked old Montaigne. What do we really know? Do we even know that a world, outside ourselves, exists? Do we know whether "life," whatever it is, does not persist even after "our" death? Are there invisible spirits or not? What exactly is man—that is, is he a "spiritual" being with a "divine" essence or an emanation from God, or, of all things, just earthly? Questions like these were asked by the brightest intellects throughout the ages. Thousands of books were written to answer them and similar "mysteries"—and for that matter are still being written. Our boasted age of science has not silenced the investigator into what is known as the "occult."

The word "occult" itself has a certain awe about it, at least, for some minds. Indeed, words or a mere word alone could frighten people into sheer terror. The tetragrammaton—that is, the four consonants composing the name of the Hebrew deity—must not be actually pronounced except in a different way from the supposed true one; though nobody knows the correct pronunciation, and it really does not matter a tinker's farthing whether it is correctly pronounced or not, seeing that nothing could possibly happen either way. But almost the whole of Jewry is domi-

nated by the fear of this one word—an example of mass credulity hardly possible to conceive.

So one might go into the other marvellous "mysteries"—as, for example, the whole question of witchcraft and sorcery. We laugh at it now, but it was no laughing matter in the days when witches were solemnly believed to have pacts with a real devil, to be able to curse with effect, ride through the air on a broomstick, materialize and de-materialize themselves, cast spells over those they wished evil, and do many other wonderful things not possible by a normal human being. The accounts left to us of both sorcerers and witches in some famous books prove that witchcraft was thoroughly believed in, and it is not surprising that with a religion like Christianity dominant in the world, the foul and unheard-of cruelties practised on thousands of poor old women, on many young ones, and even on children, should have occurred. Artists and writers seemed to delight in imagining the most horrifying scenes taking place at what they called the Sabbath—the supposed ceremony at which sorcerers and witches congregated under the leadership of Satan in person. It is obvious that some kind of reunions did take place, quite possibly on the lines of the old pagan fertility-cults. But there is no evidence whatever that witches rode on broomsticks to the meeting, or that they made a meal of newly-born children. Let no one believe that credulity about witchcraft is a thing of the past. The Rev. Montague Summers now-a-days believes in it quite as fervently as did the Rev. M. M. Gaucius, the author of *Compendium Maleficarum*, one of the most famous of all books on witchcraft.

Then look at Astrology. It is a fact that the Universe was a tremendous mystery to primitive man, and it is to us in many ways. But the secret speculations of many thinkers on the movements of the planets, the picturesque forms imagination saw in clusters of stars, together with the supposed malignant influence of the moon in certain pathological cases, brought forth the most surprising conglomeration of superstitious ingenuity the mind of man could devise. How can the "conjunction" of planets at the time of one's birth influence his whole life? How can calamities on this earth possibly follow other conjunctions? Why should the moon be a planet of brooding and melancholy, friendly to the sun, and hostile to Mars? What is actually meant when one is told that Venus is a planet of love? How can Mars "preside" over war and battle? Why should the influence of the Moon, Mercury, Mars and Saturn be "malefic," while that of the Sun, Jupiter, and Venus generally "benefic"? So far did astrologers go with their absurd phantasies that they even applied the signs of the Zodaic to the human body, and believed that they could be correlated; and some renowned herbalists managed even to find the signs in various herbs. Cures, they contended, were almost impossible without the wonderful secret knowledge of the stars and the signs applied to medicine, and the particular parts of the human body devoted to both. The looks on all these subjects are amazing examples of sheer credulity.

It was the age of science which began the dethronement of credulity. Exact investigation took the place of credulous speculation. The fetters of the Bible and Christianity were overthrown, and man began to breathe the air of freedom. Whatever else was discovered in nature, one thing emerged from the studies of the biologists, the physicists and the astronomers, and that is, there was not the slightest evidence for any "secret" doctrine. Immutible laws took the place of "mysteries." The fear of the unknown was explored and explained in the laboratories of psychologists; and one would have thought

that credulity would disappear, annihilated by experimental science.

It is sad to relate, but a fact to face, that this is not so. Whether it is the wish to believe or the impossibility of disbelieving, millions of people are as much enchained by credulous superstition nowadays as ever they were in medieval times. Palmistry, fortune-telling by cards, the casting of horoscopes, crystal gazing—these and other superstitions are resorted to all over the world. They are believed in, and predictions are acted upon. Even dreams are claimed now to come under scientific laws, and astonishing happenings are deducted from even the most trivial. A book like *An Experiment with Time* proves how earnestly a modern student will plead for the truth of these sleep phantasies.

It must not be thought that the astrologers, the necromancers, the Kabbalists, the palmists, the Theosophists, and the Spiritualists are not quite sincere. Of course they are; we must grant that freely, but it does not make them less credulous. I am sure Sir Oliver Lodge believes everything he claims for Spiritualism. Had he been living in medieval times, he would have left an equally honoured name as a magnificent alchemist. He would have been one of the foremost disciples of Hermes.

As for Sir A Conan Doyle, he would have been reckoned one with Faust. This celebrated doctor, who was able to summon a spirit from the mighty deep, only did once what our materializing mediums can do almost as often as they are paid to do it. In this we have the old necromancers beaten to a frazzle. Moreover, while it is true that Faust found it impossible to levitate himself without the aid of Mephistopheles, our own Daniel Dunglas Home managed to do it alone—on the evidence of Sir A. C. Doyle—at least a hundred times. Most of us do not believe the story of Faust; we do not even believe in the levitations of Home. And certainly, the evidence upon which Sir A. C. Doyle relied, and which he so implicitly believed, provides no mean example of sheer credulity even in these days of spiritualistic claims. Perhaps the only thing which equals it in unquestioning childishness is the claim that spirits can be photographed. That seems to me to be the hall-mark of pure credulity.

Let us be thankful for the spirit of science—and of scepticism. They will prove the antidote to credulity and superstition. They will kill fear and ignorance and stupidity, and bring the light of reason to all the problems of the Universe, no matter how mysterious they may appear now. The Saviour of mankind is science.

H. CUTNER.

#### INFANT BAPTISM AND SIN

"There is no doubt that infant baptism arose in relation to the doctrine of original guilt and the rise of priestly claims in the early Church; that is, it was bound up with a horrible view of the sex question, and it still is in all the Catholic Churches, whether Anglican, Roman or Greek. Children born in the Christian family were said to be tainted with the parents' guilt, and under God's condemnation until regenerated in baptism. If the Catholic doctrine of human nature is right, then it is wrong to bring children into the world since the sex act is sinful. For reasons well known to themselves, the Romanists encourage their people to breed like animals, and then they baptize the children to protect them from a God who is angry that they were ever brought into the world. The truth is infant baptism will only cease when the Catholic Churches renounce a doctrine of human nature, which would have been ridiculed out of existence long ago in any other sphere except theology and religion."—*Dr. H. Townsend, M.A., in "The Baptist Times,"* September 12, 1934.

## Correspondence

### SUPPOSE THERE IS NO GOD—WHAT THEN?

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I am rather a busy man, but I think it will help others if I reply to the Editor's comments on an article of mine which appeared in the *Sunday Referee*, entitled "Where was God?"

I do not complain in the least that the Editor of the *Freethinker* should think I am "silly" in contending that the survival of my son has been proved by me. But it never occurred to Mr. Cohen to reflect that the following gentlemen are also "silly" with me: Sir Oliver Lodge, Profs. Flammarion, Richet, Wallace, and at least twenty of the most eminent scientists in the world. Will Mr. Cohen dare to call *them* "silly"? I don't mind what he calls me, if it eases his soul, but the man who would call such men "silly" is a fool, and should be pitied.

I either stated a fact, viz.: that my son spoke to me, or I did not. The scientists I have named would instantly accept my word. How can Mr. Cohen contradict us? We judge according to fact. Does he? If anyone denies that a spirit can speak, as if possessing a physical organ, I will prove he can, if Mr. Cohen commissions me to write a further article.

Assume I did speak to my "dead" son and he to me. Does not that fact knock the bottom out of a purely materialistic conception of the Universe? I assert that the theory of Materialism is as dead as cold mutton. Does Mr. Cohen object to living again? He won't be consulted. He *will* live again.

Now, if communication with the departed is a fact—and it is, despite all the "Rationalists" in the world—my submission is that all events in this world assume a new aspect. I often allowed things to happen to my children which gave them pain, for reasons they could not comprehend. And it was love that prompted my action. The "silly" thing may be to relate what man would do, and God does not. The plan and purpose of life and the Universe are totally unknown to us.

Let us, however, conclude that the greatest minds the world has known have been "silly" in holding the belief in the existence of a God of Love, and that Mr. Cohen suddenly sheds light upon us with the radiance of a revolving lighthouse. Christ, Socrates, Plato, St. Paul, Luther, Cromwell, Shakespeare, Emerson, Gladstone, and thousands of others were deluded, but one sane thinker survives: the Editor of the *Freethinker*. The God of Love, our Heavenly Father, does not exist, or the "Morro Castle" would not fire, the Gresford horror would not happen, and no Great War would take place.

Has Mr. Cohen carefully considered how such a conclusion brings him into conflict with the direct findings of modern science? Sir James Jeans, and nearly all our scientists, are now asserting that *design* is stamped upon everything. But how can it be if there is no Designer? Butler's *Analogy* is coming into its own! Everything is stamped with the product of Mind. But how can that which has mind-power be produced by that which has no Mind? And how can the highest form of Mind be manifested except in the works of a Person, while the comprehension of such a Person and His ways may be quite beyond our mental reach?

Looking at recent tragedies in the superficial way in which Mr. Cohen regards them, they would be an indictment of God. But Sir James Jeans is more likely to be right when he says that in all probability we should not be able to understand the meaning of the Universe if it were revealed to us. Then all Mr. Cohen's reasoning—which, by the way, was stated many times during the seventeenth century—might appear "silly."

I think it is. I will tell you why. I am as certain I have spoken to my "dead" son, as I am that I am replying to Mr. Cohen; and my son, after a most painful death, told me he was quite happy. Perhaps He who planned the Creation knew my son would be, and

I have lived to see there was a great mercy behind his terrible "death."

The funny part of Mr. Cohen's remarks is in his perception of the *purpose* of death. Surely it can have no *purpose* if Mr. Cohen's previous reasoning is sound?

REV. WALTER WYNN.

[Mr. Cohen will reply to Mr. Wynn in the next issue of the *Freethinker*.]

#### DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

SIR,—In reply to Mr. Stafford's criticism:—

(1). He says the fact that all matter is essentially in motion "is a rejection of mechanical materialism." (par. 7). Can he quote one mechanist who champions dead, inert matter? Until he can, his criticism is unfounded. As Bergson says, the only way to disprove mechanism is to show that matter *is* inert (in which case there is room for the *élan vital* to act as mover.)

(2) If Mr. Stafford will re-read my remarks he will see that I *did not* "take exception to the statement of Rudas." (par. 7). On the contrary, I showed how it committed him to the mechanist position.

(3) After rejecting my statement that the methods of physics will become universal, he finally approves of the idea! (par. 9), and the reason physics is taken as a standard is that it has proceeded with verifiable hypotheses, while the complex sciences have toyed with unconnected principles like "soul," "Life," etc.

(4) Using dialectics, I posited the capitalist—scientist contradiction to be that of private v. public exploitation of and, labour, knowledge and capital; this to represent an alternative line of development. But determinism will not brook alternatives; only one line is possible, and this is predictable *given all the relevant facts*. Mr. Stafford's insistence on the proletarian line indicates that he is in possession of all the relevant facts, i.e., the laboratories of the world, for the next century, hold no secrets from him.

Does Mr. Stafford see no element of oligarchy in Russia? When he postulates a rival group he is dealing, not with my thesis, but with one of his own, for in mine the attribute of potency rules out rival concerns.

(5) As for "Mr. Taylor's fear of the proletariat," *the proletariat I distrust is that to which Freethought is a closed book*. The persecution of the few does not appeal to me as a good substitute for the persecution of the many.

My dealings with the "proletarian vanguard" (Communists) may have been unfortunate. Mr. Stafford criticizes the value of Freethought, and the editor grants him a considerable quantity of space. Meanwhile, I send a criticism of the boosted Rudas pamphlet to R. P. Dutt. Result, nothing. There is also a pamphlet owing. And I have been waiting four months for a (paid for) copy of another Communist organ. And to cap all, at a recent T.U. Conference at Blackpool, a Communist expressed approval of the Disaffection Bill on the ground that it would be worth using when the Communists got in power!

G. H. TAYLOR.

#### Society News.

##### WEST HAM BRANCH

THE West Ham Branch finished its Summer Season of meetings on Sunday, October 7; and, this year, the meetings have been very good indeed. Audiences have been good. Many new faces—some becoming "regulars." Some new members. Besides the speakers of previous years, Messrs. Bryant, Tuson, and Campbell Everden, all new to West Ham, made good impressions. So did our two young speakers, Messrs. Paul Goldman and G. F. Green. Special thanks are due to the Branch Secretary, Mr. Fred Warner and Mrs. Warner. From May to October, they missed only one meeting; and they advised us of that. Much of the success is due to their devoted attention to the work.

Mr. Chapman Cohen speaks in the Stratford Town Hall on November 25. After that new ground will be touched by three meetings in Leyton before Christmas.

H.S.W.

#### SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

##### LONDON.

###### OUTDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Sunday, October 21, Mr. L. Ebury. Highbury Corner, 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury. South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Monday, October 22, Mr. C. Tuson. Highbury Corner, 8.0, Thursday, October 25, Mr. C. Tuson.

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, Mr. Wood (W.P.). Wednesday, 7.30, Messrs. Wood, Bryant, Collins and Tuson. *Freethinker* on sale outside Park gates, and literature to order.

###### INDOOR.

HAMMERSMITH (Hampshire House Club, nearest Station, Ravenscourt Park): 11.0, Mr. George Bedborough—"Disarmament."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Prof. F. Aveling, D.Lit.—"The Psychology of Religious Experience."

STUDY CIRCLE (68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, October 22, Mr. A. D. McLaren—"The Diffusion of Culture."

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Conway Hall, 49 Theobalds Road): 7.0, Chas Latham, J.P., L.C.C.—"The Importance of the Borough Council Elections."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. ("The Laurie Arms," Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, Debate: "Fascism or Communism, which offers the best for Humanity?" (Opened by A. K. Chesterton (B.U. of Fascists). Reply by R. Roberts.

##### COUNTRY.

###### INDOOR.

IRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Boilermakers' Hall, Argyle Street, Birkenhead, opposite Scala Cinema, entrance in Lorn Street): 7.0, F. Edwin Monks (Manchester)—"Crime and the Criminal."

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Cobden Hall, Cort Street, Blackburn): 7.30, Monday, October 22, Mr. J. Clayton.

BLYTH: 7.0 Monday, October 22, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Godwin Commercial Hotel, Godwin Street): 7.0, The Rev. J. B. Allen (Frisizinghall)—"Purpose or Chaos."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Miss Utley (Burnley)—"My Visit to Fascist Italy."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (McLellan Galleries, 270 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Mrs. Janet Chance—"Five Years in a Sex Education Centre."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Milton Hall, 12a Daulby Street, Liverpool, off London Road, by the Majestic Cinema): 7.0, Otto Baier (Liverpool) The Temple of Humanity, Liverpool—"The Handmaid of Tyranny."

MIDDLESBOROUGH (Subway): 7.0, Thursday, October 25, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Plymouth Chambers, Drake Circus): 7.0, Mr. McKenzie—"Penalties of Ignorance."

READ (Sports Club): 7.0, Debate—"Is the Spiritualist Position Tenable?" *Affir.*: Mr. Hoole (Clitheroe). *Neg.*: Mr. J. Clayton.

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Havelock Hall, off Frederick Street): 7.15, Friday, October 19, Mr. A. Flanders.

STOCKPORT (Assembly Rooms, Varm Lane): 7.0, Sunday, October 21, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Green Street): 7.0, Mr. Brian O'Donnell (Ex-Catholic priest)—"Some Experiences at Home and Abroad."

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