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Views and Opinions

Education and the Good Citizen

SOME years ago I attended a Conference called to consider the question of religion in the schools. Among those present was the well-known Nonconformist, Dr. Clifford. He claimed to be in favour of Secular Education, but he wanted it with religious teaching. He also remarked, with evident approval from most of his hearers, that it was the duty of the teachers to turn out good citizens. I promptly protested against any such thing. I explained that so far as could be seen the less Governments and teachers set themselves to produce "good citizens" the better for everybody. Dr. Clifford was mistaking sound for sense. So far as one could judge, very few of the men who have done the most good would have been considered by the Government or the educationalists of their day as "good citizens." From Jack Cade to George Lansbury, and from Socrates to Bradlaugh, men who go about asking questions, trying to upset things, or to advocate things that have never before been advocated, are considered by all Governments, without a single exception, as very bad citizens. A "good citizen" in the eyes of a Government is a man who pays his taxes, does as he is told, never grumbles, believes that wisdom always goes with authority and honesty with emoluments, and shouts "God save the King," or "Long live the Soviet," or "Heil Hitler," or "Vive la République," at the proper moment. If he does not act in this way, if he will fight anything that he considers unjust or untruthful, and tries to "debunk" customs and institutions, then this kind of citizen finds himself invited, more or less politely, to drink the hemlock, or he is banished, or imprisoned, or executed because he is a very bad citizen. Of course, if he lives long enough to outgrow his original enthusiasm, and to outlive his original ideas, and takes part in the game of making "good citizens," then he may be called a great man, Society will forgive him for what he has done since he has decided never to do it again, and there is more joy to

a Government over one reformed reformer than there is over ten thousand unreformed "good citizens." And when that reformed reformer dies he may be counted as one of the men who have helped to make a country what it is. Monuments may be raised to his memory. But the Lord help the young man who takes this dead man for his model—that is the dead man who was once alive, but who died some considerable time before he took part in his own funeral.

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The Quest for Accuracy

A minor row has been going on for some days concerning a resolution passed by the London Labour Party to "examine and report on all text-books in use in L.C.C. schools with a view to replacing those books not regarded as accurate and reliable with books of a more important character." One teacher, Mr. W. Jenkin Thomas, of Hackney Downs School, construed this as an attempt on the part of the Labour majority in the L.C.C. to remodel the school books in the interest of a political party. Mr. Herbert Morrison repudiates this intention, and calls upon Mr. Thomas for "a handsome apology." On the face of it, and in relation to this particular charge, Mr. Thomas is, I think, wrong. School books are being continuously overhauled, and are being selected with a view to their being what those in power consider more "accurate." But the deuce of it is that to nearly everyone in power accuracy and desirability are almost synonymous. This does not apply to one party more than another. It does not apply to one Government more than another, or to one country more than another. Constitutional Britain, Fascist Germany or Italy, Soviet Russia or Republican America, provides no difference whatever. In every case history, ethics and sociology are taught as those in power wish to have them taught, with whatever modifications an opposition can effect. The quarrel between England and America, say, over the War of Independence bears a different aspect in British and American school books. The European War tells a different tale in the schoolbooks of Germany, France, Russia, and Britain. It is certain that when India achieves real Home Rule, or independence, the account given of the British rule in India will not be that which is given in our school-books. And, of course, whether it is a case of different parties in power, or different countries, the difference is explained as due to prejudice on the part of the "other fellow," or to deliberate falsification. I do not know the politics of Mr. Thomas, but I feel certain he is not a member of the Labour Party, and that if he were his protest would never have been made. In a deeper sense, but not the one that Mr. Thomas intends, his protest is justified—but I feel certain that if the justification was made Mr. Thomas would be the first to protest against it.



### Teaching the Young Idea

If we turn to other things outside of mere politics, the case is just as bad. I need not stress the case of religion. That is well understood by all readers of the *Freethinker*. It is certain that the schools of the country are largely run in the interests of a particular religious sect. In the non-provided schools this object is naked and unashamed. These schools have no other real purpose but to foster the interests of this or that religious organization. And in the schools that are wholly State-provided, while the purpose is not so direct, still by keeping away from the child views that are antagonistic to religion, or even critical of religion, the sectarian end is helped as much as possible. We need not stop at religion. Even science is utilized to the same end. Evolution is now a commonplace with all educated minds. Yet there are very few schools in the country—none among the elementary, I think, and not many in the higher schools in which a plain and direct teaching of the origin of man from the animal world and the fundamental identity of man with the animal world could be stressed without raising the kind of protest that Mr. Thomas has raised.

History follows the same plan. The other day Professor Gilbert Murray complained of the tendentious tone given to the histories placed in the hands of children. At all costs our own country must be placed in the right, and even if the facts are too glaring to permit of this being done openly, then sanction is given to the general principle and ugly disturbing facts are carefully excluded. The consequence is that boys and girls leave school without their minds being in the least prepared for a critical study of history. One need only talk to the average boy or girl who leaves school to find that their minds are choked with ready-made opinions. Quite recently I found one of the teachers of history in one of our large public schools, who complained that he was so enraged with Charles Laughton's presentation of Henry the Eighth, that he had to leave the theatre before the film was half-way through. Although the film only claimed to present a sketch of his private life, it was divested of the fairy book atmosphere of king-like men and stately queens and beautiful princesses, and so was objectionable. Negatively and positively education largely works along the wrong lines. The child has to discover the way to truth for himself and herself, after he or she has left school, and very few have either the inclination or the opportunity to make the search.

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### What is Our Aim?

Now I am not, be it remembered, blaming one party, one government, or one nation. The fault is common with all, it is part of every system of State education—essential though the State provision of education is. It goes even beyond the State. If it did not it would not be embodied in the State system. The fundamental fault is that parents, guardians, educational institutions, and governmental systems do not regard the training of the mind of the child as the main thing, but aims at instructing the child *what to believe* in history, science, religion, ethics and sociology. Their fundamental aim is not education, but instruction. We are all so infatuated with ourselves that we can think of nothing higher or better than ourselves; and if we can train our children to become copies of ourselves, then we are happy, and consider our duties as parents or guardians discharged. If we are Catholics then we want our children to grow up Catholics, if Jews, then they must grow up Jews, if Atheists then we must see they grow up Atheists. If we are Conserva-

tives then we wish them to be Conservatives, if Communists or Socialists, then we must strive to teach them that it is only in Socialism or Communism that the truth may be found. Some of the early evolutionists pictured the cell as having in it all the parts of the body in an ultra-microscopic form, and all that had to ensue was an "unfolding," the organism being something like a nest of Chinese boxes reversed. So we regard the child as a small form of the larger form to which we wish it to develop—the larger form being ourselves. We aim at turning out "good citizens," whereas we should aim at turning out men and women who prove the wisdom of our educational policy and the benefits of the education we have given them by their swearing at a great many things which we swear by, tearing up much of what we regard as "sacred," and generally making us who survive long enough feel sorry that we were not as wise as our children are proving themselves to be.

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### Instruction or Education

I must be prepared for the question whether I would bring children up without teaching them anything. It is a stupid question, only to be put by those who have been trained in a stupid way. So I say I would do nothing of the kind. The child should be brought up to know all that we know, but should also be made to realize that we may be quite wrong in many things that we think we know. He should regard parents and tutors, not as infallible, but as *good* teachers. He should never be taught as absolute certainties, things of which we are not certain, and if we teach them to him he should be made aware of the fact that there are other opinions about on the same subject, and that we may be wrong and others right. He should not be driven into either the political, the social or the religious pen, and branded as we brand cattle. He should be trained so that he is no man's slave, whether in the intellectual or the political sphere. As early as possible he should be made to understand that the truth of one generation may be the falsehood of another, and that the pronounced falsity of to-day may become the established truth of to-morrow. There would thus be created a greater loyalty to truth when it was found, and a much keener desire to see that what one held was the truth. And surely the greatest condemnation of our present system is that it is these things that are lacking in the young when they leave school, whether it be the schools of the people, the public schools or the universities. What Ingersoll said of universities is largely true of schools as a whole. They polish pebbles and they dim diamonds. They train the fool to think he has wisdom, and they teach those who are not naturally fools to distrust their intelligence.

In other words, we require an educational system that will trust both the child and the teacher. There is not needed a commission to enquire whether the books in school are "accurate" enough. That means books which fall into line with the views of the judges, and it is with these that the trouble begins. We want books that encourage children to do their own thinking, and to think in such a way that when they leave school they do not come into the world with either fixed beliefs or stereotyped doctrines. The school should be but the first stage of an educational system, preparatory, not final. Looking at the world as it is, and as we have made it, we can hardly hope that the future will be full of extravagant thankfulness for our management. But if we can give rise to a generation that will set out on a newer and a better path, we may at least hope for some gratitude if we have set the feet of our children safely on the road.

CHAPMAN COHEN.



## What a Young Governess Did!

"We knew the seasons when to take  
Occasion by the hand, and make  
The bounds of freedom wider."—Tennyson.

SOME innocent people imagine that men and women of letters exert little or no influence in politics and upon politicians, in statesmanship and upon statesmen. It is a fond illusion. What far-reaching influence did not Jean Jacques Rousseau exert, not only in France, but in world-politics? Who heeded Voltaire? Yet he arraigned a cruel and corrupt Priestcraft before the bar of Humanity. Charles Dickens's pen called attention to many flaws in nineteenth-century civilization, and the humanism of our own time owes much to his crusading zeal. Think of Thomas Paine! His was the hand which first wrote the arresting words, "the United States of America," and the great Republic of the West owed as much to Paine's live pen as to Washington's sharp sword. Few women to-day realize that they owe so much to Mary Wollstonecraft, the little governess, who, over a century ago, startled a complacent world with a reasoned plea for equal rights between men and women. For Mary Wollstonecraft may be fairly described as the chief founder of the modern Feminist Movement, and she has other claims on the attention of reformers.

The triumph of the modern Woman's Movement is a victory for Freethought, and the belated recognition of the rights of women is a tribute to the pioneers, from Mary Wollstonecraft to John Stuart Mill. Mary Wollstonecraft was, if not actually the first advocate of women's rights, at any rate the first of her sex to give public expression of her views, and to have the courage to live up to her convictions. Sharing the usual fate of pioneers, she was reviled as "a hyena in petticoats," and "a philosophizing serpent." Her epoch-making book *The Vindication of the Rights of Women*, was mainly a plea for the universal education of both sexes, and from the seed she sowed sprang the goodly fruit of a free national education for boys and girls, and a larger and broader freedom for her down-trodden sex.

Mary Wollstonecraft learnt in suffering what she afterwards taught in propaganda. She was the daughter of a drunken, brutal father, and a delicate, ailing mother, and the whole of her early life was spent in an atmosphere of discord and cruelty. She had even to protect her invalid mother from her drunken father's outbursts of violence. Nor was this all of the sad story, for her sister married an utter blackguard, and soon after this unhappy marriage Mary had to help her to escape into hiding.

These terrible experiences burned into Mary's mind like corrosive acid, and set her thinking furiously. She looked round her, and everywhere she saw women captive in a helpless bondage. So she wrote her famous *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, and made history with her heartfelt protest. Her book burst like a bombshell on that hide-bound generation, and the first result was that she lost her employment as a governess. Even women shunned her, and her own family thought she had gone too far; only a few "intellectuals" saw clearly that she had started a social revolution.

It is not alone her message that now interests us, but the little governess herself. Pathetic and lonely, she stands out in the faint mists of the past, a woman who commands sympathy. Of the woman herself no more complete revelation could be desired than the pathetic letters she wrote to a young American called Captain Imlay, who deserted her and left her with a baby girl. Other writers have been unhappy, and have known the anguish and terrors of unrequited

affection, but Mary Wollstonecraft addressed these letters with a breaking heart to the man she adored; the most touching and tragic love-letters in our literature. Mary actually tried to commit suicide by drowning at Putney Bridge, but was picked up by a passing boatman.

She was still despondent, when she met William Godwin, and accepted his offer of marriage as a haven of rest in a stormy life. Their daughter, Mary, was the second wife of the poet Shelley. This largely intensifies the interest of Mary Wollstonecraft's association with English literature. For Shelley was a disciple of the philosopher Godwin, and the great poet absorbed many of his ideas from the elder man. So much is this the case that it may even be said that Godwin explains Shelley, and it is equally true that Shelley is the indispensable commentary to Godwin. It is not paradoxical to say that Godwin had a very large share in forming Shelley's mind, and that the *Prometheus Unbound* and *Hellas* were the greatest of Godwin's voluminous works.

Mary Wollstonecraft had little happiness in her life. In giving birth to Godwin's child, she herself died at the age of thirty-eight years. She had done her work. To-day women have attained in a large measure the freedom she so ardently desired for her sex. They have a vote, their children are under their own control, their property is their own, and they can enter the learned professions. When Mary Wollstonecraft wrote her *Vindication*, women were in a state of helpless bondage, and much of the credit for to-day's feminism is due to this young governess, who so ably championed the cause of her sex.

Nor is Godwin's daughter undeserving of notice. Although overshadowed by the greatness of her husband, Mary Shelley had literary gifts of her own that commanded attention. It was while staying at Byron's villa on the lovely lake of Geneva that she conceived the idea of her famous novel *Frankenstein*, a grim and powerful work which made an immense and deserved sensation. None of her other novels, including *The Last Man*, and *Lodore*, had the same success. She contributed brilliant biographical sketches of continental authors and artists to Lardner's *Cabinet Cyclopaedia*, and edited her famous husband's poems. She survived Shelley nearly thirty years, and latterly made her home with her son, Sir Percy Florence Shelley, at Boscombe Manor, Bournemouth. It is noteworthy that Stevenson dedicated one of his best-known books to Shelley's son.

At Bournemouth, William Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft, and their daughter, Mary Shelley, are buried. It was the intention of Sir Percy to erect a monument to his world-famous father in the adjoining church, but the then vicar, a Mr. Bennett, refused his permission on account of the poet's Freethought opinions, and the splendid marble memorial had to find refuge at the more hospitable Christchurch Church, where it is regarded as one of the most notable literary shrines of England.

MIMNERMUS.

### BENTHAM ON FOREIGN TRADE

To destroy foreign commerce it is only necessary to sell everything and purchase nothing; such is the folly which has been passed off as the depth of political wisdom among statesmen. Trade has been confounded with gambling, in which the gain of one man is always founded upon the loss of another—it has been pretended that men can only enrich themselves by deep oiling others, that they live as gladiators only by destroying one another. On the contrary, in a social undertaking all the adventurers may reap their share of advantage; since, other things being equal, the more labour there is the greater will be the result.—Cited in "Jeremy Bentham," by C. M. Atkinson, p. 171.



## A Clerical Falstaff

Referring to his corpulence at a late period of life, he confessed: "I am, you know, of the family of Falstaff." Mentally, too, he was of that giant breed; and just as Falstaff was exiled by Henry V., so was Sydney Smith kept in exile by the politicians, who feared his freedom of thought and tongue as Henry feared Sir John's. And with as much cause. (Hesketh Pearson: *The Smith of Smiths*. p. 133.)

SYDNEY SMITH was born at Woodford in Essex, June 3, 1771. One of the wisest, and certainly the wittiest, of all the clergy of the Church of England, and one of the most brilliant conversationalists of his time. Sydney was sent to Winchester College, and went through the usual bullying from the older boys, and floggings from the masters, which were at that time, and much later, considered indispensable for the sons of the gentry, and indeed for all boys. In the process, says Mr. Hesketh Pearson, in his recently published, and excellent life of the Rev. Sydney Smith, *The Smith of Smiths*. (Hamish Hamilton, 1934), Sydney "contracted such a hearty loathing of the whole business that, when quite an old man, the mere mention of Winchester would make him shudder." He devoted one of his essays to condemning the entire system, root and branch. He also condemned those parents who said: "Because I have gone through it, my son shall go through it also." And observes: "Can anything be more stupid and preposterous than this concealed revenge upon the rising generation, and latent envy lest they should avail themselves of the improvements time has made, and pass a happier youth than their fathers have done." (p. 26.)

The career of Sydney Smith affords a perfect illustration of the phrase, "A square peg in a round hole," and, indeed, the phrase owes its origin to Sydney himself, for he used it in a lecture, in which he observes, "a square person has squeezed himself into a round hole," and "the doer and the thing done seldom fit so exactly that we can say they were almost made for each other." He was speaking from bitter experience, for he had no desire to be a clergyman, and was quite unfitted for such a profession.

After leaving Winchester, Sydney went to Oxford, where, at the age of twenty-one, he took his degree, and had to choose a profession. He had been studying medicine in his spare time—and used to delight in doctoring his parishioners and friends, later on—but his own choice was for the Bar, which he considered the best profession for a young man with ambition. However, his father had different views, and refusing to supply the necessary financial aid, issued the ultimatum: "You may be a college tutor or a parson," and to Sydney's protests replied: "Then you may go as a supercargo to China." Neither of these alternatives appealed to Sydney's ambition: "'In the Church,' said he, 'a man is thrown into life with his hands tied and bid to swim; he does well if he keeps his head above water.' Nevertheless, it was the only profession open to a scholarly and intelligent man with no private means, so into the Church he went." (p. 28.) A clear case of the square peg in a round hole.

In truth, Sydney was not a religiously-minded man, although being forced into the Church he adopted its creeds and dogmas, he had no bias that way. Compare him with his contemporaries, Wesley, Newman, Pusey, and Keble, whose thoughts were wholly concentrated upon the next world, and this will be apparent. Sydney's thoughts and energies were all concentrated on this world. He was a thorough-going reformer. He angered the clergy of his own Church by advocating Catholic Emancipation. When he was, later in life, made a Justice of

the Peace, he angered the squires and landed gentry by taking the side of the poachers. "His public activities were endless," says Mr. Pearson, "he organized the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, which published cheap editions of educational works. He considered that the upper classes required scientific training, and he helped to found the London University. He forced Parliament to vote grants and developed a system of national education. He played a leading part in the Reform Bill crisis, and was foremost among those who fought for the abolition of slavery and the emancipation of the Catholics." The Church cannot claim any credit for his work, for it was carried on in the face of its bitterest opposition. Neither can Christianity, for it is not concerned with this world, but the next, and it lacks the humour with which Sydney abounded. As Mr. Pearson observes:—

He was, perhaps, the first to realize that one could only quicken an Englishman's intelligence by tickling his sense of humour; by making his countrymen laugh he made them think. Professor Saintsbury compared him with Voltaire, giving the palm of absolute simplicity to Sydney. There had been no one at all like him in England before, and there has been no one to compare with him since. (p. 61.)

He detested the crude fanaticism of the Methodists and held them up to ridicule. Of the religious Tracts which it was customary to circulate among the poor, he declared that most of them were written on the assumption that thieves were inferior in common sense to children of five:—

The story generally is that a labourer with his six children has nothing to live upon but mouldy bread and dirty water; yet nothing can exceed his cheerfulness and content—no murmurs—no discontent: of mutton he has scarcely heard—of bacon he never dreams: of bran bread and the water of the pool constitute his food, establish his felicity, and excite his warmest gratitude. The squire or parson of the parish always happens to be walking by and overhears him praying for the King and the members for the county, and for all in authority; and it generally ends with their offering him a shilling, which this excellent man declares he does not want, and will not accept! These are the pamphlets which Goodies and Noodles are dispersing with unwearied diligence. It would be a great blessing if some genius would arise who had a talent of writing for the poor. He would be of more value than many poets living upon the banks of lakes—or even (though we think highly of ourselves) of greater value than many reviewing men in the garrets of the north. (p. 81.)

Sydney had plenty of opportunity of seeing for himself the conditions under which the poor lived. His first appointment was that of Curate, in sole charge, of the Parish of Netheravon, near Amesbury on Salisbury Plain. The condition of the poor was appalling: "A young girl got sixteen pounds of spinning work done a month and received four shillings for it. One man aged fifty-five was very unhealthy, worked hard for four shillings a week, and was beaten by a farmer with a large stick so viciously that had he not been wearing a greatcoat, he would have been crippled. Another man supported a wife and four children on six shillings a week. Nearly all the people were dependent on parish relief, and not a man received as much as ten shillings a week." (p. 29.) Sydney at once set to work to improve the conditions, in which he enlisted the help of the squire, who had taken a great fancy to his new Curate.

After three years at Netheravon he moved to Edinburgh; here he made the acquaintance of Dugald Stewart, Murray, Jeffrey, Brougham, and Walter Scott; the latter, he liked as a man, and admired as a writer: "but could not help laughing at his love of



distinctions and his little snobberies. When, for example, Scott was making a laboured attempt to establish a pedigree, Sydney gravely referred to his own: 'My grandfather disappeared about the time of the assizes, and—we asked no questions.' " (p. 41.)

It was at this time that Sydney, Brougham and Jeffrey, founded the *Edinburgh Review*, but it was Sydney's idea, and he had some difficulty in talking Jeffrey over. Sydney edited the first two numbers himself, after which Jeffrey became editor. It was a great success from the start. Macaulay began his career, as a young man, on the *Review*.

W. MANN.

(To be concluded.)

## Heaven in the New Testament

1. *The Two Heavens*:—The New Testament writers use the word "heaven" to mean either the sky, or the residence of God. Thus:—

Behold the birds of heaven. (Matt. vi. 26.) The stars shall fall from heaven. (Matt. xxiv. 29.) They shall see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven. (Matt. xxiv. 30.) Henceforth ye shall see the Son of Man . . . coming on the clouds of heaven. (Matt. xxvi. 64.) The heaven gave rain. (Jas. v. 18.) These have power to shut the heaven that it rain not. (Rev. xi. 6.)

Swear not . . . by the heaven for it is the throne of God. (Matt v. 34.) He that sweareth by the heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by Him that sitteth thereon. (Matt. xxxiii. 22.) No man hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven. (John iii. 13.) Jesus Christ who is on the right hand of God, having gone into heaven. (1 Peter iii. 22.) There was opened the temple of God that is in heaven. (Rev. ii. 19, 15, 5.)

In all these cases the same Greek word is employed, and employed in the singular. It is likewise used though plurally in the following cases, where "Father which is in heaven" occurs, namely, Matt v. 16; iv. 6; vi. 1, 9; vii. 11, 21; xix. 32, 33; xii. 50; xvi. 17; xviii. 10, 19. But it is thus used also in Hebrews i. 10 and 2 Peter 3, 5, 7, 10, 12, 13, where the visible heavens are plainly referred to. The singular and the plural are both found together in Acts vii. 55, 56, where we read that Stephen "looked steadfastly into heaven . . . and said, 'Behold I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God.'" It is remarkable that in every one of the texts above quoted "heaven" or "heavens" is used literally. The writers obviously believed the one heaven and the other heaven to be equally present in space. They did not regard the sky as real and the divine abode as figurative. Even the oft-repeated phrase "Kingdom of heaven" is no figure. It means that this scheme of government was devised in heaven although set forth to be practised upon earth; just as the gold of Ophir was the gold of Ophir, although brought from thence to decorate the Temple at Jerusalem; or, to use a homelier example, York ham is York ham, no matter where it is sent to for sale. Thus in the New Testament, "heaven" has always either immediately or remotely a local sense, and signifies, as we observed before, either the sky or else the home of God.

2. *The Relationship of the Two Heavens*:—On this point the New Testament writers do not leave us in doubt. According to them the sky is the lower heaven, and the home of God, the higher one; the latter being behind and beyond the former. This is proved by the fact that they tell of different occasions when people on earth have been able to look through

an aperture in the sky into the heaven where God is.

Thus we read that Jesus when leaving Jordan after his baptism "saw the heavens rent asunder" for the Holy Spirit to descend upon him in dove-like form. (Mark i. 7); and that he said Nathanael should see "the heavens opened and the angels of God, ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." (John i. 51.) Stephen, too, in the passage before quoted, declares that by an opening in the heavens he beheld the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of God. (Acts vii. 57.)

The Prophet of "The Revelation" says that "a door was opened in heaven," through which he was permitted to see wondrous things. (iv. 1.) It might seem from this that the New Testament writers believed the higher heaven to be directly above the lower one, but there is evidence to the contrary. 2 Peter iii. 5, speaks of some who "wilfully forgot that there were heavens from of old, and an earth compacted out of water, and amidst water by the Word of God, by which means the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished." This refers to Genesis i. 7, 8, which says that "God made the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament heaven." The word "firmament" involves the belief that the sky has a rind or crust covering it at the back. In the last passage waters are said to be above as well as below the firmament; and the one before plainly implies that the letting down of these waters brought about the deluge either of itself or by aiding the floods around the earth to rise and overflow. In fact Genesis vii. 11, says that on this occasion "the windows of heaven were opened."

It is very remarkable that whilst holding such views, the New Testament writers so often allude to the opening of the heavens, without seeming to have felt the slightest surprise that this had not been followed by a second Deluge. The only explanation is that they imagined the lower heaven and the higher heaven to be separated from each other by a sheet of water through which ran shafts with folding doors. Thus on their scheme the earth and the sky together form a demiglobe, of which the earth is the flat solid bottom, and the sky the round, hollow, hard-crust top, the whole being fixed down below in a flood, so as to have the water round it at all sides. The nearest thing to this is a huge bowl and plate covering each other hermetically, and immovably secured at a depth in the midst of the ocean.

The foregoing passages might seem to show that the New Testament writers believed the seat of God to be just within the higher heaven. But St. Paul at any rate did not hold such an opinion. He says he knew one caught up to the third heaven (2 Cor. xii. 2), yet he does not pretend that this person, by whom he evidently means himself, ever got as far as where God is. In "Ephesians," he declares that Jesus "ascended high above all heavens" (iv. 10); and that God "raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places." (i. 20.) The idea that God must reside far up in heaven, arises from the conviction that height and holiness are in direct proportion; so that the higher a locality be, the holier it is.

3. *The Lower Heaven*:—The New Testament writers have something to say about the familiar objects of the sky, namely, the sun, the moon, the stars, and the clouds. The darkening of the sun, and the failure of the moon to give light, are signs of the coming of the Son of Man. (Matt. xxiv. 29; Mark xiii. 24.) In "The Revelation" we find that upon the Breaking of the Sixth Seal, "the sun became as blood" (vi. 12); and that upon the Blowing of the



Fourth Blast, "the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon . . . so that the third part of them was darkened." (viii. 12.) But the effect in the last two cases is not so disastrous as might have been expected, for various events are described as transpiring after the mishap of the sun and moon. With respect to the stars, it is said they "shall fall from heaven" as further token of the Messiah's near approach (Matt. xxiv. 29; Mark xiii. 25). "The Revelation" in the first of the passages just quoted says, "the stars of heaven fell unto the earth"; and in the second it declared that "a third part of the stars was smitten," when the like happened to the two great luminaries, and with the same result. The work cited also tells of a certain red Dragon whose tail swept a third part of the stars down to earth (xii. 3, 4.) As these authors believed that the heaven wherein the stars are contained encloses the surface of the earth all round like a tightly-fitting dome, they concluded that the stars cannot fall except towards the earth, and must infallibly reach it unless arrested on the way. This fall is set forth as a terrible portent, but nothing whatever is said of its occasioning any graver inconvenience than might be involved in the loss of stellar light.

Hence it would seem that the stars were believed to be all about the size they look, for otherwise how could they be supposed to strike the earth without doing it great harm, or perhaps ruining it completely? It is probably on this account that the sun and moon are not represented as falling along with the stars. They would seem large enough to do a lot of mischief, especially as the sun is so irascible. These inferences are supported by Hebrews xi. 12, which mentions the numerousness of the stars. Perhaps they were considered as flakes of light and the fall of them pictured as a star-storm. On the other hand, "The Revelation" (viii. 10, 11) tells of "a great burning star as a torch," which fell from heaven upon a third part of the rivers, and upon the springs, and turned them into wormwood; so that here at least amplitude is implied. But this star is probably no less exceptional in nature than in effect, and may have been thought of as a soft or gaseous substance, which divided itself so as to alight only where the waters happened to be.

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

(To be concluded.)

## Acid Drops

The gross humbug and hypocrisy associated with the B.B.C. has driven the *Church Times* to make a mild protest. The B.B.C., as is well known, will have nothing to do with advertising. Yet it gave a lavish advertisement to the special issue of the *Times* on completing its one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of its birthday, and the *Church Times* suggests that it was paid very handsomely for doing so. But while protesting against using the microphone for advertising the B.B.C., week by week, has no objection to advertising its own publications, although the difference between advertising its own, and other peoples' publications will not be immediately apparent to the unsophisticated. Still, the B.B.C. with its faked speeches is like Voltaire's Habbakuk, capable of anything.

But one form of advertising combined with open propaganda the B.B.C. does permit. This is the weekly talk on new books, with its power to boycott books of which it does not approve, and the opening of the way for bribery on the part of publishers. At present the one who is doing these weekly talks is Mr. G. K. Chesterton. Both the publisher's name and the price is given, twice, usually. And the selection opens the way for the most open propaganda. In Mr. Chesterton's hands the occa-

sion is made the most of to praise books that support Roman Catholicism and the politics of the Roman Church, and to belittle other books that tend in the opposite directions, but which cannot well be hidden. The cowardly and one-sided form of this propaganda, with its power of belittling opposing views is quite true to the tradition which the B.B.C. has established. The advertising of the continental stations, and the propaganda of some of the American stations is at least open and honest.

One more word on the B.B.C. If any of our readers want a really humorous entertainment, we strongly advise them to listen to that pet preacher of the B.B.C. Canon Elliot. In voice, intonation, enunciation, manner and matter, he outdoes the most comical parson ever seen on a music hall stage. And for stupidity he outdoes even the Bishop of London in the days of his greatest vigour. When at home we never miss Canon Elliot. Long may he preach. He is the finest clerical humorist we have ever heard. And it is all so natural to the man. We never miss him when we have the opportunity of listening.

The *Church Times* is not altogether pleased with the developments in Palestine, although it recognizes that when the British Government wished to secure control of a country which would give it a key to the near East, the establishment of a Jewish State under its control was as good a method as any. But it does not like the modernization of the birthplace of the Saviour. We are not surprised. The picturesque, with its dirt and mud houses does give to travellers an air of reality to the gospel story, and it enables newspaper men whenever they come across an old well, or an old building, to moralize on our Saviour halting at the well, or entering the old doorway. But when a country is studded with motor garages and tram-cars and telephones it is very difficult. Even the *Daily Express* cannot picture "the Master" taking a motor-car ride to get to Jerusalem, or "phoning to his disciples that he will meet them near the picture palace to advise them as to their future movements." It quite destroys the spiritual glamour of the "Holy Land."

It is specially interesting to note the progress of Christian teaching in the Holy Land. Naturally, Christians are anxious to convert Jews, and so they make special provision for Jewish girls in the Christ Church Girls' School. Unfortunately quite a number of Jews in Palestine are convinced that the Religion of Israel is not true and their propaganda to this effect has offended both Christians and believing Jews. The *Church Times* calls it "a sinister Anti-God Movement." It adds:—

It was significant, for instance, that on Armistice Day the ceremony on Mount Scopus at the British cemetery, overlooking the Holy City, was for the first time divorced from any religious service. It became a purely military and secular occasion.

We shall have made a little more progress when the military part goes the way of the religious. If the Armistice has to be remembered, the occasion should be secular and secular only.

True to its policy of, so far as is possible, segregating Catholics from others, there is now established a Roman "Catholic Shop Assistants' Warehousemen and Clerks' Guild." Trust the Roman Church seeing to it that the interests of the Church are placed before everything else. There can be no other aim than this in forming such a Trade Union.

"God has plenty of time," cries the Rev. Dr. James Reid, in a sermon called, "The Mood of Futility." "Have we been expecting spectacular triumphs?" Dr. Reid urges us not to be in such a hurry. He reminds us of the farmer who was solicited to buy a patent hog-food which fattened hogs in half the normal time. The farmer declined with scorn, saying: "What's time to a hog."



Christians must get very tired of the endless absurdities of fatuous commentators who say that everything in the Bible means something else. Here is Prof. J. A. Findlay now telling us that "The Sea stands for international relations in Apocalyptic imagery." It would thus seem that the Sea of Glass (Rev. iv. 6) must have meant that one could see through it; that when the Sea gave up its dead (in Rev. xx. 13) the "international relations" restored to life the millions killed in international wars; and that when "there was no more Sea" (Rev. xxi. 1) all international relations came to an end for ever! When the Wind ceased to blow on the Sea (Rev. vii. 1) we presume it meant that our clergy left off talking nonsense about an international army.

Dr. F. W. Norwood, in a front page article in the *Sunday Referee*, claims that Christ "was friendly with all men," and "He never had a personal enemy in all His life." It suited Christians during the war to emphasize that "Religion brings not peace but a sword; not unity but division," to quote from a 1915 sermon. Matt. x. 34; Luke xii. 49-53; and xiv. 26 were favourite passages then to prove the unfriendliness of Christ to those whom we were fighting. Was Jesus friendly? He may have been justified in using "a scourge of small cords" (Jno. ii. 15), but it was as "friendly" as His epithets "adulterous" (Matt xii. 39), "that fox" (Luke xiii. 32), or—to quote from a single chapter (Matt xxiii.) "fools," "serpents," "vipers," and (half-a-dozen times) "hypocrites." The stealing of a donkey (Luke xix. 30) is often resented as unfriendly, and we should hardly address our "friends" with threats of "greater damnation" (Mark xii. 40), as if mere everlasting hell were insufficient. All these things border on positive unfriendliness to any but a Christian.

Another breach with a very honourable past! Modern Quakers have adopted many Christian practices formerly repudiated or ignored. *The Friend* now apologizes for its break with old Quaker antagonism to "Pagan" feasts like Christmas. "Times have changed," says the "Friend," in explaining that "most of us (Friends) today have no hesitation in joining with our fellow-Christians in celebrating Christmas, Easter, Whitsun, and other great landmarks of Christian experience." We cannot believe that Quakers intend too "celebrate" amongst these "landmarks"—the Blasphemy Laws, under which Quakers and Atheists alike suffered, but which are now maintained solely to persecute Atheists.

An article in the same number of *The Friend* is signed "A. D. Belden." It purports to tell us "the deepest meaning of Christmas." Mr. Belden quotes some outrageously silly "poetry," and dares to call his own wild nonsense "these self-evident facts." He imagines that Jesus "revealed the sinless life" by "cumbering Himself with our sinful flesh." If Christ were God, his "sinlessness" has no bearing at all on human weaknesses, and if He was a sinless "Son of Man," there is no sense in saying "He cumbered Himself" with any kind of sinfulness.

A volume called *In Spirit and In Truth*, is advertised as being "the first Jewish-Christian Symposium ever published." We imagined that the Holy Bible merited this description. Canon Raven contributes (to the Christian section of the book), an article in which he expresses his conviction that "the development of thought in recent times amongst Christians is pointing more and more clearly to the adequacy of the interpretation of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel." It looks as if a bargain were being proposed on the basis of Christians throwing overboard the misnamed "Synoptics," while the Jews swallow the gospel of the "Logos." St. John's Gospel is described by Ingersoll as "telling us that the only way to get to Heaven is to believe something that we know is not so"; an excellent summary of the latest and worst of the gospels.

The Rev. Dr. C. J. Cadoux explained to the Nicene Society in Oxford the relationship between Faith and Morals as follows: "The rejection of untrue doctrines is itself a moral duty, and Faith therefore can be regarded as included in morality. Morality rests upon religious doctrines, and as such can be treated as implicates of Faith." This is not very clear, but it was meant as an introduction to some straight talk which must have astonished the Nicenists. Dr. Cadoux claimed that "God is the only infallible authority," and that He possesses no infallible interpreter in Pope, Bible or Creed. In a remarkable declaration of independence, this Church dignitary proclaims that as regards Ethics, "In this matter man needs no infallible guide: his conscience and commonsense are sufficient. If guidance is needed anywhere it is in the practical application of these principles, and this is just where the Church has so often gone astray."

We were right in predicting that few sermons this Christmas would dwell on the ancient popular fiction of the Star which stood over a stable. Only so out-of-date an old fogey as the *News-Chronicle* Religious Editor can exhibit this mildewed relic at all, and even he refers to it a little contemptuously as referring to "One who was born while His Star illumined the Heavens." But Mr. Redwood's superior version is quite as silly as the unscientific myth of the gospels. It merely stamps those who state it thus as being intellectually dishonest as well as unscientific.

The *Modern Churchman* is the most critical of all the religious journals. It is edited by one of the most cultured of Churchmen. One is therefore amazed to find there an article appropriately enough headed: "The Praying of a Preposterous Padre." Every word of it might well have appeared in any Fundamentalist paper a hundred years ago . . . unless, of course, it is a piece of sheer satire, as its title might imply. The author, Rev. Stanley McKelvie, M.A., D.D., in that case "jokes wi' deeficulty." If it was seriously meant, as we must assume, it is a proof of what we have frequently claimed, namely, that it is impossible to rationalize prayer. If you believe in prayer, it is inevitable that you will believe in praying for rain, for money, and to be first in every race and competition in which you are interested. It has nothing to do with fact or experience, otherwise only infidels would ever be poor, or die, or be sick or out of work.

We are heartily in agreement with the editor of a Catholic paper, who tells an anxious enquirer that, "it is Catholic teaching that those who die in a state of mortal sin go to hell for all eternity." This ought to prove a smack in the eye for those blasphemous people who persist in calling themselves Christians, and dare to dilute God's own religion by such absurdities as saying that hell is a "state" within one, and that "eternity" never really means eternity. Hell, we insist, is a genuine place of fire, where the heat is at least 2,000 degrees centigrade, and where sinners never die, but are eternally in a state of agony.

On the other hand, we were greatly astonished to learn from the *Universe* that "the exact date and time of Our Lord's birth are not known." And this after all of us have been celebrating the event on December 25—the date vouched for by all the pastors and priests we have ever met, and publicly proclaimed as the genuine anniversary in Christian countries all over the world.

But the *Universe* does not stop there. It admits that Dionysius the Little, the monk, who fixed the date of Our Lord's birth in the year 754 after the founding of Rome—that is, in our year 1 A.D.—was "in error," and it was not till the eighth century that England used the letters "B.C." and "A.D." Moreover, Latin Christianity did not celebrate the Nativity on December 25, even in the third century. The Greeks first did so in 376 A.D.; while the Armenians waited till the fifteenth century. And these facts are not taken from a Freethought, but a Catholic, journal. Needless to say, the Birth of Jesus will be celebrated on December 25 this year just the same.



While Catholics are very proud of having "received" 12,000 people in England and Wales, they are frank enough to point out that "the majority of the population continue to drift away from religion and into unbelief." This is cheery news, and we hope readers will call the attention of some of the "drifters" to this journal, which will help to consolidate their unbelief. Another cheerful bit of news is that "Catholics are finding it harder to induce the Education Board to allow them to build schools." Catholics should be prepared to pay for their own religious teaching—just as Jews and some other religious sects do. Why not? Why should Catholics expect the country as a whole to pay for their own superstitions and sectarian teachings. No answer will be forthcoming, of course.

The exact number of Roman Catholics computed by the central committee of the Holy Year to be in the world is 349,845,457. We give the figure in case the number is authoritatively wanted for quotation. It is interesting also to add that during the Holy Year, 43,731,351 Masses were heard on week-days, for the "intentions of the Pope." We wonder how much exactly all these Masses brought in hard cash? Even at 6d. a time, the sum would be over £1,000,000. What a golden game is this religion!

Archbishop Downey, who is at present in Australia, has not much faith in the present methods of peace propagation. Conferences, agreements or bonds of arbitration are hopeless, he considers, without "the grace of Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ." This particular formula has been put forward before all Christian peoples in general, and individual warmongers in particular for many centuries; but so far it has been an utter failure. Perhaps one reason is that "there ain't any such thing"; or perhaps what the Archbishop would like is for the Church to settle everything, which would mean, in actual practice, that Roman Catholics would boss the show. And did that in the past ever stop the tiniest, weeniest war?

In case any one should imagine that Christians are not quite alive to their failure in converting England, the following from Dr. H. L. Goudge should prove of interest:—

In 1921, Mr. Beaverstock and I took part in the first Anglo-Catholic Priests' Convention. . . . We talked, in spite of a peal of laughter from Canon Lacey, of converting England. . . . But how are we getting on with the job? We may do many things well, but does anyone regard us, as a great evangelistic force? England seems to grow more and more heathen, and our failure even to arrest decay weighs upon my mind ceaselessly; I am just as responsible as anybody else.

And this melancholy admission refers to the failure to convert *believers* to Dr. Goudge's special brand of belief. His failure to convert *unbelievers* hardly needs referring to—it is so thoroughly complete.

The Rev. A. E. Witham makes the "amende honorable"—to the B.V.M. (the Catholic nickname for the wife of Joseph and the Mother of God). "I am ashamed to confess," says Mr. Witham, "that only once in all my ministry have I preached a sermon in praise of Mary." And now? He certainly need no longer be "ashamed." Rather he outdoes all his rivals as he writes of "the golden legends." Of course he does not actually *believe* them, but "if we love humanity, if we love poetry, if we feel the charm of old-world literature we cannot but be predisposed to love these quaint tales." This is "modernity" with a vengeance! We need not believe anything, but Oh aren't these yarns "quaint?" It is easy, after that, to rhapsodize about Mary, like Mr. Witham does in his apostrophized eulogy: "Here is purity purer than the Alpine snows, than lily or crystal—the Mother of God."

An article in the current *Methodist Recorder* is headed "Belisha Beacons." It is a sermon from the text, "And Jacob took the stone that he had put under his head and

set it up for a pillar." Mr. Robert E. Roberts, the preacher of this sermon, seems to object to "localising of God's traffic with earth." He protests against the fact that the Church "excommunicated Galilee, and anathematized Darwin," while they built great churches "at the street corners, their foundations firm-set upon earth, their spires penetrating the heavens, asserting their assurance that here have been seen ladders to heaven," and so on. We think Mr. Roberts means well, but where would he get his own pious creed to-day, if in the dark ages these "Jacob's ladders" or "Belisha Beacons" had not kept alive the religion men still foolishly believe. As Hosea Biglow, or Lowell, makes the priests say in "A Parable":—

"Our task is hard with sword and flame  
To keep Thy Church for ever, the same,  
And with sharp crook of steel to keep  
Still as Thou leftest them Thy sheep."

Old age alas, oft shows itself in gradual loss of memory. It is sad to think that God must be growing old by now. And the *Methodist Recorder* assures us that "the memory of God is the prime necessity of all." Times change (or do the preachers' memories wither?) for it used to be most important for erring sinning man to be assured that God would forget things if asked to do so. "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" used to console us, and we refuse to believe that God's memory is getting "better" in His old age. We used to pray daily, "Remember not Lord, our offences nor the offences of our forefathers." May we not strike a bargain with God! Suppose we undertake to forget God, and take for granted that He in turn will forget us.

Even the Methodists are less united in belief than we are expected to imagine. Protests are noted in the *Methodist Recorder* from various sources against heretical utterances by well-known Methodist ministers. Dr. Soper states distinctly that he does not believe in the Virgin Birth. A correspondent naively demands to know "If it be not true, whoever could have invented it?" and says "one feels that Luke would be astounded to learn" what Dr. Soper says. But we imagine that "Luke" would be "astounded" at a lot of things! Other critics or heresy-hunters attack the Rev. Leslie Weatherhead because he said, "I cannot think of the Cross as something planned from the beginning of the world." What is really comic is that this critic professes to believe that although Christ was foreordained to be betrayed, etc., "we are not forced as a natural sequence to deduce that Judas also was foreordained to betray."

## Fifty Years Ago

### OUR FATHER

WHAT is "our Father" doing when a bad rice crop kills off thousands of his children? What is he doing when an avalanche or a landslip mangles and buries hundreds more? What is he doing when floods sweep all before them, carrying along homesteads, destroying whole villages or towns, and tossing men, women and children like corks upon the surge? What is he doing when earthquake suddenly springs upon a doomed city, dashing down its walls, tumbling in its roofs, reddening its ruins with blood, and paralysing the survivors with such grief and terror that their lot is almost worse than that of the murdered dead? Does "our Father" who guides all the forces of nature, plan and execute these catastrophes? Does he enjoy their horrors in anticipation? Does he watch with a satisfied smile the agony of the dying and the terror of the living? Does he hear their cries unmoved? Does he listen without a pang to the shrill cries of bereaved mothers, and the deep groans of strong men who gaze on the desolation of all things they held dear? Does he see without a shudder the ghastly relics of human bodies in the *débris*? Does he behold without a sigh of regret that white baby face which should only have been smothered with kisses, and that cold hand of its dead mother protruding as in mute appeal?

The "Freethinker," January 11, 1885.



# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL:

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

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- A. W. COLEMAN.—Thanks for reference. May find it useful later.
- F. DOWNSWORTH.—It would take a series of articles to reply to all your questions, and a mere sentence or two here would only mislead. You will find all these points dealt with in Mr. Cohen's *Theism or Atheism?* and *Letters to a Country Parson*.
- A. B. MOSS.—We are very pleased to have your high praise of *Primitive Survivals in Modern Thought*. Your unabated interest in the Freethought Movement, after over sixty years spent in it, should be very encouraging to newcomers.
- S. M. DE GOLIER (Penn.).—Thanks for New Year's greetings, which we heartily appreciate.
- L. RICHARDS.—We are suspicious of any institution or person in whose power it lies to exercise a censorship of thought or publication. We do not know of any instance in which that power has been exercised for good.
- R.S.—We do not know of any conviction for "Blasphemy" where what has been the subject of the indictment would have been considered indecent under the ordinary law. "Indecent" in such a connexion only means "improper" (conventional distinction) or irregular, or not permitted. And at times it may be very necessary to be either or all of the three.
- G. S. SMELTUS.—Your suggestions will be borne in mind, but they cannot be carried out at the moment.
- J. SIBERT.—Glad to know that the advertisement was of use.
- T. MAYNARD.—Quite a good suggestion, but it would involve too great an expense.
- J. HANLON.—Received. Will appear shortly.
- FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—H. Hunter, £1.

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Sugar Plums

The New Age publishes by way of a review of *Primitive Survivals in Modern Thought*, the introductory chapter. It is prefaced by a note, from which we extract the following. It says that the book

outlines ideas whose value is applicable over a much wider field than that in which the Freethought movement operates. The difficulty of everyone who takes part in the exposition of new ideas is to get others to understand what he means in despite of his handicap in having perforce to express himself in terminology comotting obsolete ideas. Whatever may be one's opinion of Mr. Cohen's views as a Freethinker, there is no one better qualified to teach the would-be controversialist how to attain clarity of thought and exactitude in expression. Those readers of these pages who are able to realize what a weapon in the banker's defence lies even in the common vocabulary from which both sides build up their arguments, will appreciate the timeliness of this publication.

We are very near the date of the Annual Dinner, January 26, and we hope that applications for dinner tickets (8s. each) will be sent in as early as possible. There promises to be a record number of guests, and those who have the arrangements in hand will find their work easier if the tickets are secured in good time. There will be an excellent dinner, a very excellent concert, and the usual interesting speeches. It will also give Freethinkers an opportunity to meet each other. We hear of many coming from the Provinces. Cheap excursion trains will be running on the Saturday from nearly all parts. Full particulars will be supplied by the N.S.S. General Secretary.

Those who wish to secure hotel accommodation over the week-end should write the General Secretary without delay. There will also be arrangements for those who prefer a vegetarian menu. But this *must* be known in advance. Tickets may be obtained at the office of the *Freethinker* or from the offices of the N.S.S.

A report from the Gran Chaco front in the war between Bolivia and Paraguay tells how the birthday of "Our Lord" was ushered in by the rival armies. The following quotation from the report needs no comment, "As midnight approached the armies ceased their struggle in the swamps and wastes, piled their rifles and knelt on the battlefield or in trenches, while the chaplains celebrated Mass. But the sentinels soon gave the alarm, and one of the bloodiest fights of the war was fought out immediately after Mass."

On Sunday next (January 20) Mr. Cohen has arranged to lecture in Middlesboro' in the afternoon at 2.30 p.m., in the Eckert Assembly Rooms, and at Stockton-on-Tees in the evening in the Jubilee Hall, Leeds Street, at 7 p.m. There promises to be a good gathering of friends from the outlying districts, and Mr. Cohen will be pleased to meet as many as possible. We understand that arrangements are made to provide tea for those coming from a distance.

In our last issue there appeared an article by Mr. George Bedborough on "Heaven, Hell and the Soul." Mr. Bedborough was criticizing an article by the Rev. Dr. Bett, which appeared in the *Methodist Recorder*. Dr. Bett now writes us as follows:—

In the article entitled, "Heaven, Hell and the Soul," it is stated that I said that Hell is a "house covered with a tiled roof," and also that "Hell never carries with it the meaning of retribution." I never said either of these perfectly absurd things, or anything like them.

Nothing is farther from our desire than to misrepresent or misquote either friends or enemies—particularly the latter. But Mr. Bedborough is a very careful and studious writer, who is fond of verifying all he writes. So having procured a copy of Dr. Bett's article, we find the following:—

In the Old Testament, the word translated "Hell" is *Sheol*, and the English translation is a very misleading one, for the Hebrew word really means what hell meant in earlier English—the world of the dead, and *never carries with it a meaning of retribution*, except in the sense of death and destruction.

Dr. Bett must have forgotten what he wrote.

The other sentence which Dr. Bett says he never used, or "anything like it," is, it appears, in the *Methodist Recorder*:—

The first meaning of the English word "hell" is the "hidden place." The Anglo-Saxon *helan* means to hide, to cover, and it has left several other traces in our speech. We say that a wound is "healed" when it is covered with skin, and the family name "Hellier" means a tiler who covers a house with a roof. When men first began to think of a future life they thought of the underworld, the hidden abysses, the covered places beneath the earth, as the abode of the dead, and that was what the word originally meant in English.

Mr. Bedborough wrote, "Hell means the covered place, or a House with a tiled roof." Now we do not think



that, while the words as cited by Mr. Bedborough are not textually accurate, that there has been in this passage any serious misrepresentation of what Dr. Bett said. Dr. Bett does say Hell was thought of as a covered place, and that the word, in its English setting connoted a house covered with a roof. Again, Dr. Bett was either very badly served by his printers or he has forgotten what he did say. By the way, we think it will be found that the Anglo-Saxon *haelan* means, not to cover over but to heal or to make whole. But that is a very minor matter.

We do not, of course, strive to cite passages that will please those in opposition to us, and we are not surprised when Christians are annoyed because we put into plain language the obvious implications of their words. We have often said that real Christianity is so revolting that when it is put into plain and unmistakable language Christians at once complain that we are caricaturing. It would be very foolish to misquote knowingly in a paper that is so well watched as is the *Freethinker*. Dr. Bett wonders whether we will publish his "correction." We have done as we usually do in such cases, as an example to our Christian contemporaries.

## Protestantism and Fascism in Germany

The struggle of the Protestant Church in Germany against the attempts of the Nazi Government to create a new unified German Church is being followed with great interest throughout the world. Our Christian opponents are openly rejoicing at this spectacle of a Christian organization taking a stand against a Hitlerism, which up to now has met with no serious resistance elsewhere. And we may be sure that Clericalism is doing its best to profit from this glorious opportunity to show the world the strength of moral purpose which Christianity generates in the faithful. Well, we are prepared to give honour where honour is due. We applaud the persistent struggle of those men and women who, in the face of violence and various other forms of persecution, unwaveringly went forward in their campaign to protect the Church and religion of their choice from Fascist domination. At the same time, we do not wish the praiseworthy actions which we applaud to blind us and others to the realities of the situation as a whole, and we believe there is a need for a fuller investigation of the rôle of the Protestant Church in Fascist Germany.

In the first place it is important to note at what juncture the opposition from Protestant circles became discernable. Hitler's accession to power did not provide cause for protestations from any of the Christian movements in Germany. The Protestant and Catholic Churches both officially welcomed the advent of the Hitler Government. And why? Because it declared Christianity to be "the unshakable foundation of moral life," and Godlessness a scourge which it intended to wipe out of existence. The terrorization carried out against Socialists, Communists, Trade Unionists and Freethinkers and the annihilation of the fundamental civil liberties which their respective movements represent, did not arouse hostile demonstrations from the German Churches. The anti-Fascist organizations and their press were outlawed without any protest coming from German Clericalism. Even pacifists and Jews were mutilated and robbed of their means of existence without the Churches, which declaredly stand for race equality and peace, uttering any serious threats of oppositional action. The anarchy and barbaric violence of the early months of the Hitler regime is gradually being superseded by the legal machine necessary to hold down a discontented people. The "People's Tribunal" has replaced the Leipzig Court as supreme

instrument of Justice, which, with its dominant personnel of Fascists and militarists proves it to be a mockery of the ideals of Justice and Law, in whose name it serves as an instrument of Fascist reaction. We have yet to hear from the pulpits and the clerical press in Germany the first serious denunciation of this tribunal, which is serving the severest penalty possible, that of death, upon those who are serving Truth, rather than Fascism, by doing their share to let the German people know what is actually happening in that country. All this persecution, all this glaring injustice, the Protestant Church, along with the Catholic Church, was prepared to tolerate. These are "secular things," which have nothing to do with morality and preparation for a better life to come! But the Nazi Government, seeking to make the Fascist State supreme authority over a "unified" nation, could not ignore the Churches. For here were organizations with a wide influence over the mass of the people, and thus representing either a source of strength to Fascism (if their subservience to the Fascist regime was guaranteed) or a source of constant danger, if they could not be relied upon to act as a pliant instrument of Fascist rule on every important issue. The various autonomous Churches needed unifying, but unifying under Fascist control. Leaving aside the problems of the Catholic Church, which need separate treatment, let us follow the effects of this policy on the Protestant Church.

In the first place the Bible and the Biblical creeds needed revising, just as the school "history" books had to be revised, to conform with Fascist theory and aims. They must be stripped of their anti-Fascist tenets, such as internationalism, pacifism and race equality (which are usually preached by the Christian parsons, if not put into practice by them) and the person of Jesus must be re-moulded accordingly. The so-called cultural authority in Germany, Herr Rosenberg, in his book, *The Myth of the Twentieth Century*, goes into great detail about the new religion and the new German Church, which must be established to conform with the spirit of the German Nazi Revolution. We select the following as examples of the line of thought which he develops:—

The race-bound national soul is the measure of all our thoughts, aspirations of will and deeds, the final criterion of our values.

One can interpret the story of Jesus very differently. . . . It was in the interest of the imperious Roman Church to represent submissive humility as Christ's nature. To rectify this presentation is a further indispensable demand of the German movement of renewal. Jesus appears to us to-day as a Master sure of himself. . . . The formidable preacher and the scornful one in the Temple; the man who dominates, and whom "all of them" followed; nor the lamb of sacrifice of the Jewish prophecy, not the Crucified One, is to-day the formative ideal, which shines out to us from the gospels. And if it cannot shine from them, then the gospels themselves are dead. . . .

A German religious movement will have to declare that the ideal of neighbourly charity must implicitly be subordinated to the idea of National teaching; that no action may be approved by a German National Church which does not first of all serve the security of the German people. Here is shown once more the insoluble antagonism to a point of view which openly declares that the claims of the Church stand higher than those of the Nation.

A German State must . . . pledge all its ministers of religion to the oath to guard the honour of the nation.

Thus are religion and the Church to harmonize with Fascist theory and the dictatorial State. Jesus Christ is needed as a model hero made in the image of the German hero and Master—Herr Hitler. Church



teachings must be in line with the Fascist creeds of Nordic race superiority and the Fascist "right," based on that superiority, to conquer and rule the world. Church ministers must swear fidelity to the secular dictator.

The Nazi Government launched its campaign to put this into practice. A Government post was created, that of Reichs-primate, and a personal friend of Hitler, Herr Mueller, was entrusted with the unification and subordination of the Protestant Church. It would take too long to discuss in detail the efforts which were made by Mueller and his clique to compel the Protestant community to "voluntarily submit" the Church to the authority of Fascism.

X.

(To be concluded)

## Fear and Religion

THE rapid growth of Freethinking during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, together with the development of natural science, produced some very striking consequences in the field of religion. The dividing line between subjects labelled "sacred," and those marked "secular," which hitherto had completely separated the two, became gradually fainter. And religion, which had proclaimed its divine origin, insisting at the same time that this gave it an immunity from criticism, found itself, in an increasing measure, subjected to the same methods of investigation, and made amenable to the same rules that had been found so fruitful in the general study of nature. It should be said that religion did not submit to such treatment without a struggle. It protested, it threatened, it imprisoned, but without achieving its aim to silence its critics. In the end Freethought gained a firm footing in modern life, and religion found itself compelled to treat for terms with an enemy it could no longer hope entirely to crush.

Commencing with an examination of revealed religion as given in the Bible, thence proceeding to the study of comparative mythology, critical science eventually turned its attention to the question of origins. The discovery of the immense antiquity of the human race, the accumulation of information concerning the beliefs, the customs, and the habits of primitive peoples in all parts of the globe soon made it evident that religion as a whole must fall within the general law of evolution, and that all extant religious beliefs and ritual had been derived from such primitive beliefs and rites as were found existing among surviving tribes of savages.

Such conclusions come as a shock to multitudes of believers even to-day, but they were veritable bombshells when thrown in quite a mild form amongst Christians who still clung to an orthodoxy that was substantially identical with what had prevailed in the early seventeenth century. The comparative weakness of the churches, however, was becoming manifest, for they had been forced to abolish the cruder instruments of torture. This inspired men and women to proclaim heretical opinions with greater and increasing freedom. No longer compelled to accept certain teachings laid down by an interested and powerful priesthood, it was but a short while before the more daring spirits saw and said that the religious legends which had become crystalized into set doctrines had no greater authoritative value than tales such as Jack and the Beanstalk and Old Mother Hubbard. It is a fact that stories similar to these are embodied in many religions.

The consequences of the application of the scientific method to religion have been devastating. There was soon established a common agreement among

scientific students as to the fundamentally similar origin of all religious beliefs, whatever differences of opinion might exist regarding the true line of their development. In spite of the emphasis placed by one writer upon the primary importance of astronomical myths, by another upon the influence of superstitions connected with sex and fertility, by a third upon the significance of ancestor worship, etc., there is to-day a general agreement that religion takes its rise in the ignorance of primitive mankind.

The difficulty fronting a modern enquirer new to the subject, is that of recovering something of the state of mind with which our primitive ancestors faced the world in which they lived. That they were ignorant is obvious. And in a world where ignorance is profound fear is certain to play an active part. The fear of danger from storms, from animals, and from human enemies, occupied a considerable part of the mental life of early man, but, even more important still, because it is associated with all of them is his fear of those invisible beings which he creates, and which Hobbes said were at the foundation of all religion.

Fear, indeed, is one of the widest and most constant accompaniments of all forms of sentient existence. It appears at a very low level of animal life, and is one of the most dominating emotions. Every animal has to retreat before danger, it is one of the conditions of survival. The start that a horse gives at an unusual sight or sound, the timid glance round which the bird takes when it is seeking food, the panic displayed by monkeys in the presence of snakes, and the shrinking of any animal when it encounters something strange or unknown, are all examples of the play of fear in the animal world.

Such fear is exhibited in the conduct of early man. But man is superior in intelligence to the animal. He is enabled to see further, but he also learns, at least in his less developed stage of existence, to dread more. He experiences new terrors which animals can never know. His fears become organized organically in the structure of his nervous system, and socially in the creation of institutions which perpetuate his fears in the act of offering protection.

Starting with the assumption that whatever moved was endowed with life as he knew it, primitive man eventually arrives at the point where he personifies the natural forces. He comes to believe that the thunder, the lightning, the earthquake, are manifestations of spirits. He is afraid of these spirits, because they have the power to injure him in one way or another. Thus his fears take on a more permanent form, and eventually they become part and parcel of the great religions of the world. It may be said that these religions, from one point of view, are nothing better than organizations of fear. Even where we find a religion openly stressing the value of love, closer examination reveals that its surest hold on man consists in the terrors that it states or insinuates will visit him in the event of unbelief.

One may sum up the matter by saying that fear is a defence mechanism which is evolved as a protection against danger. In the animal world this mechanism does on the whole actually protect it against possible enemies. The same also applies to man, but in addition he develops the fear of the supernatural beings by which he believes he is surrounded, and hands the result on to his descendants in the shape of religion. The function of religion is to safeguard man from the anger of these assumed spiritual controllers.

Experience furnishes the raw material of all thinking. And the only way man can approach the problems of what Sir James Jeans called, in one of his theological moments, *The Mysterious Universe*, is by



utilizing his experience. In his attempts to understand it, man projects himself into nature. He fashions personalities, whom he believes control the forces around him to his benefit or to his injury. These personalities, or spirits, or gods are copies of himself, differing only in the extent of their power. Savage or civilized, this remains equally true. His gods become civilized as he himself becomes civilized. It is a fact that the gods cannot cease to be magnified men without at the same time ceasing to be gods. The savage is no less logical than the modern believer. He reasons that they have feelings and desires like his own, that the things which please him please his gods, the things which he hates, the gods hate. He offers the gods gifts in the same spirit that gifts are offered to him; either to allay wrath, or for benefits conferred or expected. His primary concern is to placate the gods, to gain their favour, and to prevent their finding cause for offence. Sir James Frazer well says, in his epoch-making work, *The Golden Bough*, that religion consists in "a propitiation and conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct the course of nature and of human life." Another concise definition comes from the pen of Chapman Cohen, and is to be found in his *Foundations of Religion*. He writes: "Religion implies that the world, or some part of it, is controlled by one or more supernatural or superhuman beings, and that human welfare depends upon man's attitude towards these assumed existences." The evidence that religion is ultimately founded on the ignorance and fear of primitive man is vast and cumulative.

Unquestionably the fear associated with religion would have been weaker to-day, even religion itself might have wielded less influence than it has and does, but for the rise of a body of men whose special duty it became to perpetuate religious belief because by so doing they furthered their own interests. The claim of these medicine-men—and to a certain extent it is the claim of the modern priest—was that in some way they stood nearer the gods than did ordinary individuals. They were able to converse with and transmit the wishes of the gods to the community. A measure of superior cunning, self-delusion, the power of neuropathic conditions all play their part here. And once these men have succeeded in establishing themselves as a distinct, highly privileged order, two significant factors, love of power and sheer self-interest enter. It is small wonder that they are determined to oppose any departure from tradition or custom.

The medicine-man is the forerunner of the modern priest, or more correctly the priest is his lineal descendant. He is a brother in spirit to the Archbishop and the Pope. The names change, but the essence of what is upheld remains the same. Whatever difference exists between the primeval and the present situation lies rather with the worshipper than with the mediator. The savage demanded results. If it was the task of the medicine-man to procure rain, then he was expected to produce it. Failure not infrequently meant death. The modern believer may also expect results, but he seldom even manifests the courage to find fault when they are not forthcoming. In a sense it may be said that priests were the first practical psychologists. For the maintenance of their status necessitated an understanding of human hopes and fears, and how to exploit them to their own advantage.

To the priesthood we owe some of the most hideous, and most deplorable chapters in human history. Their lust for power made them oblivious to the suffering and misery they caused. Their zeal for the aggrandizement of their order became an obsession and was exalted to the rank of a first principle.

They ruled by the fears of the invisible world which they excited. And the belief in witchcraft, the cultivation of intolerance, and the sanctification of war, are among the blessings they have conferred upon us. In an age when the emotion of fear was most potent the gods were cruel, merciless fiends. For the priests were the mouthpieces of the gods, and the gods decreed as they desired.

When Christianity arose in the days of the decline of the Roman Empire, it found that, in Greece and Rome particularly, the primitive appeal to fear had worn somewhat thin. The gods, too, had become to a considerable extent humanized, and the after life was without any great amount of terror. The Christian teachings contained the fear of the supernatural in a strong and vigorous form. Moreover, they painted the future life with a degree of terror almost unknown to the Western World. While all religions owe their existence to man's fear of the unknown, and his sense of weakness before the forces of nature, none may boast the distinction of having traded on his ignorance and exploited this fear to a greater extent than Christianity. It made the inculcation of fear an art. The pictures drawn of hell almost beggar description; and to escape hell became the main purpose of every Christian to whom religion was a living thing. The more this deification of fear grew, the more rapid was the decay of the ancient civilizations; the weaker the ancient cultures, the stronger became the fear inculcated by the Christian religion. It is no exaggeration of the truth to say that the power and wealth of the Church were built upon the fear it instilled into the minds of the people of Europe.

But though the Church advised its dupes to concentrate their attention upon the next world, it directed its energies towards rooting its wealth and prestige securely in this one. It aimed at being the Catholic Church in fact as well as in name. To this end it insisted upon strict observance of religious duties. Neglect in this respect was denounced as a sin for which a man would have to do penance. Thus it played on man's fear of being a social outcast to enforce docile obedience to its injunctions, and unwavering faith in its dogmas. Heretics, however, were a thorny problem. And when threats of the terror to come failed to bring them to their knees, the Church used the secular power to torture, to imprison, and to burn those who dared to question its dictates. In addition their houses were destroyed, and their property confiscated. The faith was spread by fire and the sword. The Church ruled and amassed its wealth by terrorist methods. It made men and women afraid to voice their honest opinions, afraid to listen to or read views conflicting with orthodox Christian teachings: it even made them afraid of their own thoughts. And it left its record written in the sufferings of millions.

C. MCKELVIE.

(To be concluded)

It was Sunday morning in a men's class in a church school.

"Will you please tell me," said a member to the teacher, "how far in actual miles Dan is from Beersheba? All my life I have heard the familiar phrase 'From Dan to Beersheba,' but I have never known the distance."

Before the answer could be given another member arose in the back of the room and enquired:

"Do I understand that Dan and Beersheba are the names of places?"

"Yes."

"That is one on me. I always thought that they were husband and wife, like Sodom and Gomorrah."

"Everybody's."



## Maunderings

I HAVE before me a battered volume entitled *Maunder's Treasury of Natural History*. The cover is faded green cloth, the leaves brown at the edges. The small print is beautifully clear. The nine hundred little woodcuts have a pleasing liveliness, though some are quaint. The gilt lettering on cover and spine is bright. The book was published by Longmans at ten shillings, and contains eight hundred and twelve double-columned pages, with Introduction, Appendices and Indices.

The title-page is missing, but it must have been published by 1850, as 1848 is quoted as recent.

It is an amazing book. It abounds in unconscious humour. The author was rightly named Maunder, which means to beat about the bush, to drel.

When good Mr. Maunder lets himself go there is no holding him. What he avoids is exact description and physiological details of the creatures. The book erupts travellers' anecdotes and accounts of the value of creatures to man. Largely it comprises quotations from naturalists, the reader being advised to read the originals, titles and authors being given.

It is as a dispenser of pious platitudes and moralistic meditations that Maunder excels. The whole volume is a vivid example of what passed for biological science in the pre-Darwin days.

In the Introduction Maunder tells us that this is the fifth of a series of Popular Treasures. He continues:—

"It has also been further delayed owing to a very serious illness with which I have recently been afflicted, but from which, with humble thanksgivings to the Almighty Dispenser of Life and Health, I am now rapidly recovering."

All through the Bible is accepted literally as the Word of God, quoted as authoritative and faultless wherever it mentions living organisms.

It is best to let Maunder speak for himself, which is often in the form of patronizingly approving quotations from Naturalists.

"Buffon carried his teleological reasoning, or ascription of design, so far as to assert that the humps on the back of the Camel were badges of slavery, and intended to adapt them to the burthens of their taskmasters."

Goat Moth. "For what was decreed to be the termination and punishment of Man is found in active operation throughout the whole chain of Nature's works, which are but dust, and unto dust return."

Cuckoo. "Every animal, from the highest to the lowest in the scale of creation, is equally well adapted for the purpose for which it was intended."

Earthworm. "Its increase is fully commensurate to its consumption, as if ordained the food of all."

Insects. Introductory Letter to Kirby and Spence's Entomology—"Insects, indeed, appear to have been Nature's favourite productions, in which to manifest her power and skill."

Kite. "It is difficult to believe they were not intended by Nature for some more formidable prey than beetles, locusts, or grasshoppers."

Mole. "That moles were intended to be beneficial to mankind, observes Mr. Jesse, there can, I think, be no doubt."

Sparrow. "From the pen of Mr. Knapp: A dispensation that exists throughout creation is brought more immediately to our notice by the domestic habits of this bird."

This excellent Maunder was sure of the ways of Providence, of the existence of Design in Nature, and of a special Creation.

We read:—

Camel. "The Camel is one of the most valuable gifts of Providence."

Cicada. "We see the most striking proofs of that Creative Wisdom which has implanted in them an unerring guide, where reason, the senses, and the appetites would fail to direct them."

American Cuckoo. "Far less to consider as an error what the wisdom of Heaven has imposed as a duty upon the species."

Insects. "Mr. Newman's work on *The History of Insects*—The mind of insects is more wonderful than our own: it has neither speculation, retention, judgment, nor power; it is, in fact, an existence which comes perfect from the Creator. The new-born bee is Heaven-instructed."

Lapadogaster. "Suckerfish. How wonderfully the Lord teaches the feeblest of his creatures to provide for their own safety and that of their offspring."

Loris. "His Creator, who made him so sensible of cold, gave him his thick fur."

Mackerel. "Visit the shallower waters of the shores . . . appears to be one of those wise and bountiful provisions of the Creator, by which a large portion are brought within the reach of man."

Megachile. "Leaf-cutter bees. So far are human art and reason excelled by the teaching of the Almighty."

Mole. "All is well arranged by Divine Wisdom. God's works."

Nightingale. "Does it not naturally lead us to the Creator? Lead us to glorify the Author of all nature? The art of praising my Creator and thine!"

The Great Horned Owl. "Leads our reflections to the first, great, self-existent Cause of all. Wilson."

Sloth or Ai. "Further proofs to engage us to admire the wonderful works of Omnipotence. Mr. Waterton."

Swallow. "His instinct may be regarded as flowing from a Divine source; and he belongs to the oracles of nature, which speak the awful and intelligible language of a present Deity."

Red-breasted Thrush. "The song which every creature around is pouring forth to the great Creator. Doctor Richardson."

Wasp. "What a beautiful example of Divine foresight in creation!"

Whales. "A fresh and beautiful illustration of the perfection of Creative Wisdom."

Zoology. "Perhaps best calculated to elevate the soul to the perception of a wise and good Providence, whose power is no less visible in the creation of the lowly worm than of the exalted being, Man, to whose dominion all others have been subjected."

Zimb. "A fly. Providence from the beginning had fixed its habitation to one species of soil."

Zoophytes. "A kind of marine village, which, under the teaching of God, has been beautifully constructed."

Neither do morals escape the Maundering eye. Under the heading "Baboon," we read:—

"There is nothing so revolting as their lascivious habits, which they indulge to such a degree that it is unsafe and highly improper for females to visit exhibitions of animals where these beasts form a part of the number."

What would Maunder have thought of the crowds of women and children who assemble joyously round the baboon pit at the London Zoo?

A footnote to "Raven" states:—

"Superstitions are wearing out. . . I fear in their place, deism, infidelity, impiety."

The perfectness and supremacy of Man runs as the great motive through the book. Thus:—

"Bimana. The great mental purposes assigned to them by the great Author of Nature."

The article on "Man" fills thirteen columns. Little of it is science; most of it is turgid lyricism on the magnificence of this Lord of Creation.

For example:—

"His divine reason, and his immortal nature."

"The endowment of rational will. Professor Green."

"Man, by his superior reason, has subdued all other animals."

"Man is a compound being—the link between spiritual and animal existence."

In numerous references it is taken for granted that all other living forms subsist to minister to the comfort, pleasure and appetites of man. One example will suffice:—

"Silkworm. Illustrates the care and kindness of the Almighty, in thus making an apparently insignificant insect the means of so many important benefits to man. Mr. Jesse. Gleanings."



Our author does not neglect to employ the exactness of mathematics. Quoting from the American ornithologist Wilson, he computes the number of Passenger Pigeons which flew over him in one afternoon in the State of Kentucky to be 2,230,272,000.

These are examples; to comment further would spoil their delicious naïveté.

A. R. WILLIAMS.

### More Wayside Pulpit Wisdom

I HAD really decided to take no further notice of the Wayside Pulpit effusions, but one which was posted up shortly before Christmas is too good to be ignored, as it gives away the whole case for Christianity, and condemns the professors of that religion out of their own mouths.

Here is the gem:—

Nothing is worth having which requires a lie to uphold it.

Surely this is the frankest confession of futility to be met with since these pearls of wayside wisdom were initiated.

For the teachings of the Christian Churches are founded on lies so obvious that anyone of average intelligence, whose mental outlook is not warped by religious prejudice or clouded by ignorance, can detect them.

The doctrine that the Bible is God's Word, that it is the word of an all-wise infallible God, is one of the fundamentals of Christianity.

Freethinkers will hardly need to be reminded of the many lies which this God book contains; lies which are taught in the Christian Sunday Schools as truths, to children too young to discriminate between true and false. The Rib story; tales of talking serpents; stories of wonderful (and sometimes beastly) miracles; of the turning of the waters of a river into blood; of the turning of dust into lice by smiting it with a rod; of the stopping of the Sun and Moon by Joshua to enable him to finish off a slaughter; of the swallowing of Jonah by a whale; but lack of space prevents my going into further details.

If some of my Christian friends object and say that these tales are now discarded by the Churches, and are looked upon as allegories or fables and treated as such, we can afford to grant this as far as the more enlightened of the clergy are concerned (ignoring the fact that only a few decades ago anybody who denied their truth was in danger of being burnt at the stake.) But what about the New Testament? What about the story of the Virgin Birth? Of the feeding of a multitude with a few fried fish and loaves of bread? Of the turning of water into wine?

LIES! LIES! every one of them: and Christianity requires the lies to uphold it. Therefore, on the authority of its exponents, Christianity is not worth having.

The week after the above appeared we were treated to this:—

Never forget, you have a place in God's plans which no one else can fill.

If there is a God with a plan (I've not met one myself) then my place in it is to show up the absurdities of the professional religionists who maintain their parasitic existence by upholding lies and keeping the true facts of life from their dupes.

My place is in the ranks of those who are trying to dispel the clouds of ignorance and to persuade men and women to rely upon the efforts of themselves and their fellow men to bring about progress in Human society, instead of looking to a ghost to do the job for them, and to prove to them that:—

Nothing which requires a lie to uphold it is worth having.

FRED HODDAY.

When God said "Be fruitful and multiply," it would seem that the attention of the more intelligent was engaged elsewhere.—*Quondam*.

### Obituary

MR. W. HARVEY

ON New Year's Eve a Salford Freethinker (Mr. W. Harvey) passed away, at the age of sixty-seven. He will be missed at the propaganda meetings addressed by Mr. G. Whitehead, in Salford. His home was in a convenient spot, and has been used for years to store literature and the necessary platform when our speakers were about.

Being a keen student of Shakespeare (the writer used to call him Falstaff) he was naturally good humoured, and like the original "Sir John," was a jovial addition to any company.

A good number of relatives and friends assembled at the Manchester Crematorium, on Friday, January 4, to hear the farewell address given by Mr. F. Edwin Monks.

Colleagues from the Railway, Socialist and Freethought organizations bore silent testimony to our dead friend, and seemed to say with Swinburne:—

"For thee, O now a silent soul, my brother,  
Take at my hands this garland, and farewell."

To the widow, sons and daughters, we express our sincerest sympathy.—T.F.G.

### SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

#### LONDON.

##### OUTDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.30, Sunday, Messrs. W. B. Collins and E. Gee. 3.30, Messrs. Wood, Bryant, Collins, Gee and Tuson. *Freethinker* on sale outside Park gates, and literature to order.

##### INDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, Hall No. 5, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham, S.W.4): 7.30, Mrs. A. Saran—"Collapse of the German Freethought Movement."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham, S.E.): 7.0, Lord Snell, C.B.E.—"Is it Dawn in India?"

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Harold Pictou, B.Sc.—"Republican and Nazi Germany; Some Personal Experiences."

STUDY CIRCLE (68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, January 14, Mr. V. Sorensen—"The Religion and Customs of the Esquimaux."

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Earlham Hall, Earlham Grove, Forest Gate, London, E.): 7.0, Social: Dancing, Singing, Games, etc. All welcome. Admission Free.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. ("The Laurie Arms," Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, Mrs. Janet Chance—"Mental Courage."

#### COUNTRY.

##### INDOOR.

ACCINGTON (King's Hall Cinema): 6.30 Debate—"That Man does not Survive Death." *Affir.*: Mr. J. Clayton. *Neg.*: Mr. E. W. Oaten (Manchester) Editor of *The Two Worlds*."

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Boilermakers' Hall, Argyle Street, Birkenhead, opposite Scala Cinema, entrance in Lorn Street): 7.0, C. McKelvie (Liverpool)—"The Psychology of Religion."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Shakespeare Room, Edmund Street): 8.0, Saturday, January 12. Whist Drive and Dance. Light refreshments. Admission 1s. 3d

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Cobden Hall, Cort Street, Blackburn): 7.30, Mr. H. Archer (Burnley)—"International—Finance and Armaments." Study Circle every Thursday at 7.30.

BRADFORD SECULAR SOCIETY (Godwin Commercial Hotel, Godwin Street, Bradford): 7.0, Mr. Reginald Day—"The Soul of Jesus."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley), 2.30, K. O. Hunt (Reed)—"Evolution from the Evidence of the Human Embryo."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, M'Lellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Mr. G. H. Haydock, M.A., B.Litt.—"Justice." *Freethinker* and other literature on sale at all meetings.

(Continued on page 31)



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(Continued from page 30)

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LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Milton Hall, 12a Daulby Street, Liverpool, off London Road, by the Majestic Cinema) : 7.0, W. L. Owen (Liverpool)—"International Scepticism, Nineteenth Century."

MIDDLESBOROUGH (Bizacta Hall, Newton Street) : 7.0, Tuesday, January 15, Mr. J. T. Brighton—A Lecture.

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

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N.S.S. (The Labour Hall, Laygate) : 7.30, Friday, January 11, Mr. A. Flanders—"Why I am Not a Christian."

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Green Street, Sunderland) : 7.0, Mr. A. Flanders—A Lecture.

TEES-SIDE BRANCH N.S.S. (Morgan's Café, High Street, Stockton-on-Tees) : 7.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"Rome or Reason."

# NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

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General Secretary - R. H. ROSETTI.

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

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

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