

THE  
FREETHINKER

• EDITED by CHAPMAN COHEN •  
— Founded 1881 —

VOL. LV.—No. 5                      SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 1935                      PRICE THREEPENCE

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Views and Opinions

God and Man

A LARGE number of letters and articles have appeared in the press dealing with the very foolish anti-evolutionary lecture delivered by Sir Ambrose Fleming. The *Daily Telegraph* gave very liberally of its space, but it is to be hoped, for the sake of human nature, that the letters supporting Sir Ambrose were not the best that could be done by the religious side. If they are representative of the religious world, then for a very large mass of believers the past century of scientific progress simply does not exist; (it may be from these that the supporters of the B.B.C sermons come.) The development of science appears to have passed them completely by. In these days of mass-movements, and when mass opinion is being exalted to the rank of a first principle, the phenomenon is socially and intellectually disturbing.

In this newspaper discussion separate questions have been confused; which was to be expected. But the confusion was not all on the side of the believer. Some professed unbelievers have contributed to the chaos. Thus, while many of the believers who joined in the discussion appeared to base their belief on the assumption that God was good, some contributors dismissed a God on account of the misery and injustice in nature and human society. Like the curate's ideal of a "good book" as one that never brings a blush to the cheek of innocence (the said blushing cheek belonging to one who turns red when seeing something that the blushee has often thought about, and who reserves it for private meditation) God, if he exists must not make his followers blush or those who do not believe in him scowl.

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Pragmatical Religion

Now, the question of whether God exists, and that of whether he is good or bad are, of course, related, but they are not identical. Goodness and badness are not qualities of things in themselves; they are one or the other in relation to the end we have in view,

or the purpose for which they are used. To kill off dangerous wild animals is quite a good thing to a man who is clearing a tract of land for habitation, but the animal's description of the clearing process would be very different. Existence as such is neither good nor bad. The judgment that "There's nothing either good or ill, but thinking makes it so" is not the utterance of a God, but it comes from one of the wisest of men, so time has played less havoc with it than has been the case with "inspired" messages.

The logical quality of a belief in the existence of God stands by itself; and as a matter of fact men did not begin to believe in Gods because they were impressed with their goodness, but because they believed the Gods were too powerful to be ignored. Primitive Gods had an ugly habit of spoiling the food supply or handing out diseases whenever they felt they were not getting enough attention; and early mankind is keenly alive to the need for keeping on good terms with them. Universally Gods are worshipped because people expect some kind of gifts (the modern believer calls them "blessings"), or because they wish to avert punishment. But towards his Gods the primitive worshipper is on the whole more manly in his attitude than is his modern descendants. If early man gives his Gods worship he expects a *quid pro quo*. If that is not forthcoming he chides the Gods, threatens them, even thrashes them, or throws them over and adopts new ones who are more faithful to their salt. In the Christian religion there is far less independence. If God withholds his favours the protest takes the shape of a grovel. The Christian, like the camel, takes his burdens kneeling.

But this pragmatism character of religion persists in all ages. Like politicians seeking election the Gods promise favours to those who support them, and punishments to those who give offence. This belief in the Gods handing out rewards or punishments runs through the whole history of religion, whether the religion we are dealing with is expressed in a primitive forest or in a modern cathedral. To those who can look below the surface religion changes only to preserve its original nature.

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The Development of an Absurdity

The belief that God, if he exists, must be good arises late in the history of mankind. It is really a consequence of social and ethical development. As man gets better and wiser he passes on his own improvements to his Gods. He goes even beyond this. He gains in wisdom, so he makes his Gods all-wise; he improves in character, so he makes them all-good; he is able to do greater deeds, so he makes his Gods all-powerful. But these are only human qualities stretched to infinity. And in time this enlargement of God leads to a dangerous criticism, and sentence is passed on God in terms of his own characteristics. If God is wise and good and all-powerful, and if he



desires that justice and goodness shall be established, how can it be prevented? The enlargement of the idea of God begins to develop its inherent and devastating contradictions.

The correspondence that followed the speech of Sir Ambrose Fleming has raised the issues above stated, and the usual foolish excuses for God have been attempted. It is said that the evil in the world is not due to God but to man. God wishes man to do good and he achieves evil. But as God made man and endowed him with the qualities he has, the plea does not end the dilemma, it only shifts it back a step. If man creates evil God creates man. If God had made man differently he would have acted differently; and if man is to come before God for judgment he will be able to say with justice, "I am, oh Lord, as you made me. Either you intended me or you bungled me; and in either case you are responsible for me. You cannot condemn me without condemning yourself." I do not see what adequate answer God could make to this defence.

To this statement religious people give a reply and mistake it for an answer. But the defence is almost unintelligible. They say that when God made man he endowed him with a "free will." He had the power to choose right or wrong, and he must take the consequences of his choice. The religionist is very fond of invoking a mystery to give an absurdity an air of reason, and in this case he excels himself. As an independent entity determining action there is no such thing as a "will." It may do as a figure of speech, but it really belongs to that general theory of "souls" which is so completely dispensed with in modern psychology. That theory never explained anything, and served only to prevent enlightenment. Human action is the outcome of impulses, promptings, motives, desires, but there is no room for a separate "will." If that word could be banished for a generation from our vocabulary it would sound the death of a whole army of fakirs.

But even if we assume that what man does is the outcome of this mysterious entity "will," it cannot be denied that what a man does is because there are certain promptings which lead him to do it. If the "will" is the cause, then it is because the "will" is of a certain complexion, and if the will is only another name for the dominant motive or motives, then conduct is what it is because these motives are of a particular kind. The action performed is the one that offers the greatest attraction to the person performing it. In either case, why did not God so make the "will" or so fashion impulses that they always led to the right instead of so often leading to the wrong? The nature of the "will" and the character of the impulses are as much traceable to God as is man's physical structure. If God is the creator he cannot escape responsibility for his creation.

Stupidity is piled on stupidity when we are told that if God had not made man with a will to choose evil there could have been no freedom of choice. But freedom of choice has nothing whatever to do with a mysterious will, and no one who understood what the dispute was about has ever denied the existence of freedom of choice. Freedom means the possibility of alternatives, and freedom of choice means the liberty to choose one thing rather than another. If I am asked whether I will take a glass of whisky or a glass of water, and if I am not prevented taking which ever my taste dictates, then my freedom of choice is complete. That is only destroyed when I am prevented taking the thing I would like to take. Freedom of choice is one of the plainest of facts, and the most rigid Determinist has never denied its existence.

It is not freedom of choice, but determination of choice that is at issue. If I take one of two drinks, what is it that determines me in favour of one and against the other? If all tastes were identical we should be indifferent in selection. Were there no differences in the attractiveness of doing different things we should be careless of what we did. It is because we do not all feel attracted to the same things that a difference of choice exists; and, therefore, the problem before the scientific student is to ascertain why one course is taken rather than another. That is a very simple statement of the problem; and all the time these people are confusing it with that inconceivable thing a "Free will" to which all things are, apparently alike, and which takes one course rather than another out of "pure cussedness." Meanwhile they give the lie to their whole position by educating and training human nature so as to make the certainty of choosing the right as great as possible?

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### The Dilemma of Deity

No useful purpose is to be served by following these people further. If there is a God, and if he created the world and man, then he cannot escape the responsibility for his handiwork. If God wished man to be better than he is he should have made him better. But to damn him for being no better than he is, is to exhibit an appallingly bad temper over his own defective workmanship. The Calvinistic creed was really morally stronger and mentally more respectable when it faced the position and said that God, being God, did just as he pleased. He made some to honour and others to dishonour, and he was under no compulsion to defer to mere human standards of morality. However morally objectionable this theory is, it has a certain degree of intellectual respectability. The more "advanced" Christian position lacks both moral strength and mental dignity. Christians, real Christians, so far as their religion is concerned, do not become more sensible as the years pass. They simply become greater specialists in absurdity.

Believers should reflect that God was under no constraint to make man. He need not have called man into existence, he need not have given natural forces the qualities they have. But having, for no reason at all created man, he might at least have turned out something that was better than the actual article has become. In this connexion man, if not wiser than his creator, is certainly more generous. For he does spend a great deal of his time trying to correct the faults of God's creation. He even apologises for the blunders of the creator by taking on his own shoulders at least part of the responsibility for their existence. With infinite kindness he says the faults are not God's but man's. He apologises for God's mistakes by saying that he meant well. He even calls himself a fellow-worker with God in building a new world. Man is full of compassion for this deity who once saw better days, but who has now fallen into such a sad state. But I think the only adequate apology for God is to assume that he does not exist.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Spirits narrate things wholly false, and lie. When spirits begin to speak with man, care should be taken not to believe them; for almost everything they say is made up by them and they lie; so that if it were permitted them to relate what heaven is, and how things are in heaven, they would tell so many falsehoods, and with such strong assertion, that man would be astonished.

Swedenborg.



## Cast-Iron Christianity

"But justice in the sight of outraged man  
Must surely be; and may the wide world rise  
Upon the rainbow of pure reason's span."

*Eden Phillpotts.*

The first Salvation Army, according to the Gospel legends, was not a conspicuous success. It is said to have been "sold up," including its managing director, for thirty pieces of silver. Two thousand years later another Salvation Army was started by William Booth, a pawnbroker's assistant, and there has always been an atmosphere of the three brass balls in its highly successful career. Not long since this non-military "Army" celebrated its jubilee amid the plaudits of the newspaper press, and the blessings of very distinguished members of society with a large S. Curiously, at the jubilee celebrations, overmuch stress was laid on the social, rather than the purely religious, work of the Salvation Army. The Royal congratulations were fulsome, if not hysterical. One very august person referred to the Army's "mighty achievements," and of its "works of love and mercy," whilst another exalted personality dwelt on "the great and beneficent work for mankind" initiated by General Booth the First. The glorious free press of Old England, which is the meanest and most contemptible in the world, took up the Royal refrain, and columns of the most colossal silliness appeared in print lauding to the skies the Salvation Army and its so-called philanthropic work for the masses.

The plain, unvarnished truth is that this overpraised Salvation Army is, save the Roman Catholic Church, the most reactionary religious body, in Great Britain. General Booth's own trademark, "Blood and Fire," proves it beyond all cavil and dispute. It is, as Shakespeare puts it, "gross as a mountain, open, palpable." In a country pretending to some culture and some civilization the motto should be sufficient to make a decent man ashamed of his species. For it means in plain language that all must wash in the blood of Christ or roast in the fire of everlasting hell. It may be Christian teaching, it may even be the quintessence of the teaching of Jesus, but most certainly such propaganda is not "great and beneficent work for mankind," as some titled and distinguished folks seem to imagine.

Nor is this all of the indictment. The value of the so-called social work of this Salvation Army is exaggerated out of all sense of proportion. For example, Salvationists have all to be teetotallers. What real effect has that on the whole country's consumption of alcohol? Has it ever stopped one wealthy brewer from taking a seat in the House of Lords? Salvationists have also to be abstainers from the use of tobacco. The sale of tobacco and cigarettes was never so great as during the past few years, when women have taken to the habit. As for the alleged restoration of tens of thousands of girls and women from lives of vice, it has not affected the condition of our towns, or the statistics of prostitution. Exalted persons, and the sycophantic and lick-spittle press-gang, may praise the Salvation Army's "shelters" and "beneficent work" at Hadleigh Farm Colony, but what have Trade Unionists to say about these matters? There is no "charity," Christian or otherwise, in the business-like Emigration Department of the Salvation Army. The emigrants pay their fares, and the Army officials take an emigration agency's usual commission from the railway and shipping companies. The belauded "Suicide Bureau" of the Salvation Army is almost as humorous as the ever-delightful "Suicide Club" described by Robert Louis Stevenson. It is supposed to have saved thousands of

desperate men and women from self-destruction, but it does not appear to have affected in any way the national statistics concerning suicide, which remain much the same year after year.

Plamboyant journalists claim, in addition, that this Salvation Army took corybantic Christianity into the slums. Just so! And the slums remained slums until the mundane local Councils took the matter in hand and began the task of rehabilitation. Indeed, whatever change has been made has been entirely due to secular rather than religious causes. Why should working men and women be cozened and cajoled into giving part of their hard-won wages to fight a purely imaginary Devil? They would be better advised to fight the greedy, and probably Christian, landlords, slum-owners, and property-profiters. Believers have been lulled far too long with the pretty lullaby that "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." It is high time that they discovered that, in Britain, the earth belongs to members of the House of Lords, and other big profiteers, a distinction with a wide difference.

People are hypnotized by the big drums, trumpets, and tambourines of this Salvation Army, and imagine that it is an evangel of pure philanthropy, instead of a vast trading organization which sells regularly among its members, tea, clothing, children's toys, books, musical instruments, and all manner of requisites, and uses its large profits for propaganda. Even its propaganda will not survive the scrutiny of the microscope. Look at the purely fantastic figures concerning converts in any issue of the *War Cry*, and then add these figures together from the time this pious periodical first added to the gaiety of the nation, and disputed with *Punch* the position of a comic paper, "funny without being vulgar." The grand total of souls snatched from "Satan" amounts to millions, showing that the whole population has been converted to the Christian Religion. Which, as old Euclid expresses it, is absurd. Despite the testimonials from Fleet Street and the West End of London, the thing is a silly jest.

If this Booth Crusade really had the welfare of men, women, and children at heart, it would not confine its energies to the working class. If its uniformed officials are actually interested in social problems, let them go to the aristocrats and tell them it is immoral to draw rents from slum property. Let them go to the colliery and railway-magnates, and inform them that men are exposed to death and mutilation in order to pay royalties and dividends to shareholders. Let them tell their royal and aristocratic patrons that it is wicked that women should sew fashionable garments for a few pence, and that little children should be under-nourished, over-crowded, and ragged. Two millions of men and women today are unable to find work to do, and are living from hand to mouth in the richest country in the world. Endless repetitions of the "old, old story of Jesus and his love" in such serious times is no more useful than the turning of an Oriental praying-barrel. Indeed, Britain will never be civilized, in the true sense of the word, while it has a Christian majority. Nor will matters be improved by men and women, masquerading in military uniforms, repeating the illusions of the sixth century in order to cope with the changed and changing conditions of the twentieth century.

MIMNERMUS.

Lord Shaftesbury said in 1678: Popery and slavery, like two sisters, go hand in hand; and sometimes one goes first and sometimes the other; but whosoever the one enters, the other is following close behind.

*Knight's England.*



## The Story of the Russian Church

THE Orthodox Catholic Eastern Church, usually termed the Greek Church, remained for centuries the established religion of Russia. When compared with the Roman Catholic faith, its history is of snowlike staintlessness. It has been guilty of little persecution, although in common with all other theological cults, it has rendered small service to civilization and progress. A widely spread faith, its ramifications are still extending, and Dr. Neale, one of its ablest English historians, when writing before the Greek Church's disestablishment in Russia, justly claimed that its influence reached "from the sea of Okhotsk . . . from the ice-fields that grind against the Solovetsky monastery to the burning jungles of Malabar."

In the closing years of the nineteenth century the introduction of Christianity into Russia, in 988 A.D., was celebrated on a magnificent scale at Kiev, Russia's original capital city. Representatives of the Greek Church came from every part of the world, and few of those who participated in the ceremony entertained the faintest suspicion that, little more than a quarter of a century later, their Church was destined to disestablishment at the hands of the State. At the celebration, the memory of St. Vladimir, the Prince who introduced Christianity into Russia was duly honoured, and the hymn composed for and sung at the festival contained the words: "Nine centuries are past; on the foam of the ninth wave the shield of our faith is secure, the bequest of bygone times is strong, the banner of orthodoxy is waving, shining from afar."

Tradition tells that when what is now Russia was groping in heathen darkness, St. Andrew, the first chosen of Christ's Apostles, travelled along the Dnieper into the Scythian desert, and erected the first cross on the uplands of Kiev. Turning to his disciples, he said that: "On these hills shall shine the light of divine grace. There shall be here a great city, and God shall have in it many churches in his name."

This tale is not taken very seriously by educated Greek Christians as nearly a thousand years passed by before Christianity became the religion of Russia. During that extensive period the turbulent condition of the country precluded settled government, for the Russia of to-day was then never safe from the inroads of Asiatic nomads.

The Slavs are pre-eminently a peaceful agricultural and trading race. But tranquillity was impossible when hordes of half-savage Tartars were ever appearing in quest of plunder. So, in despair, they invited Norseman adventurers to assist them in keeping their enemies at bay. This led to the landing of Rurik with his quarrelsome and predatory band in 862, the year in which the Slavonic alphabet is said to have been invented. After the Slavs had suffered terrible trials and indignities at the hands of their invited guests, the Norsemen at last became assimilated with the indigenous population. Much as the Normans were a ruling caste in England after 1066, so were the Norsemen in Russia a governing group.

Innumerable are the legends concerning the early conversion of the heathen Slavs to the true religion, but when history replaces tradition we meet with the widowed Princess Olga, who reigned during her son's minority, repairing to Constantinople, where she was baptized by the then Patriarch of the Greek Church. The Princess' conversion proved repugnant to her son, who regarded the Christian religion with scornful indifference. But the seed was sown; priestly machinations increased, and the Prince's children were instructed in the alien faith by their grand-

mother Olga. After many vicissitudes Vladimir, one of Princess Olga's grandsons consented to baptism in 988, and Eastern Christianity became the official faith.

If the Church chronicles are trustworthy, Prince Vladimir, whose life before his conversion was not strictly Puritanical or temperate, now dismissed his six wives and several score of concubines, and never more did he partake of the wine cup, not wisely, but too well. Henceforth he was the affectionate father of his people. When he returned to Russia from Byzantium, twelve of his sons were solemnly baptized, and the giant idol, so long worshipped and adored, was ignominiously cast into the waters of the Dnieper to be borne away by the running river. All the people were outwardly obedient, and conformed to their Prince's newly adopted faith. The docility exhibited by the Slav community appears truly pathetic. This is a view, however, not entertained by devotees of the Greek Church, for Orloff, a devout Russian, assures us that: "Thus at Kiev there was witnessed an almost unparalleled spectacle of a great city, and representatives of the whole land baptized all at once. Evidently the seed had taken root, and was firmly embedded in the Russian soil; the religious and civil elements were wedded together in indissoluble bonds, and Russia's freedom and independence had so far been preserved."

Priests of the Greek Church came in numbers from Constantinople, and the new faith was disseminated far and wide. The Roman hierarchy watched these proceedings with envious eyes, and at Vladimir's demise her agents endeavoured to supplant the Greek and establish the Roman communion, but Yaroslav, the Prince who ruled from 1019 to 1054, was too completely at the calling of the Greek clergy to permit this change, while the Greek religion was still further spread, and the power and privileges of the clergy steadily increased. Yaroslav was easily persuaded by his ghostly advisers to exempt the spiritual order from all civil obligations or payments, and also ratified the right previously granted by Vladimir of priestly jurisdiction in "all causes of marriage, inheritance and sacrilege, as well as that relating to the external or internal discipline of the Church."

In constant communication with Constantinople, the capital of the Greek Empire and religion, Russia doubtless derived great advantages from the remnants of earlier Pagan culture that survived. But the monastic system that was established became the parent of many anomalies there, as elsewhere, although the monks were the first chroniclers and orators in the land. Then, as now, the Russians possessed striking linguistic powers, and such civilization as then existed being of Greek origin, its alphabet was adapted to the Slavonic tongue. Thus the Russians enjoyed a fairly uniform language at a time when the West was struggling to evolve what have since become the leading languages of Europe from barbarous dialects of Latin or Gothic origin.

But the rising Russian State was laid waste by the ceaseless conflicts of the innumerable princes, who were dominated by a passion for priority. Unfortunately, an appanage system which dated from the days of Rurik entitled every male descendant of Vladimir to the rank and emoluments of a prince. Each of these became a completely independent ruler of his special domain. He had his own military following; pensioned, pardoned or condemned at his own pleasure, and erected fortresses and governed cities as a supreme authority. These petty rulers were ever at variance and quarrelled and fought for their own advantage. Thus they played the very devil with everything and everybody. Then, in 1236, the feared



and detested Tartars under Batuy invaded the weakened and distracted State, and in a few short years ravished and ruined nearly all that civilization had so painfully accomplished. Cities were plundered and burnt; princes and priests were put to death, and countless citizens and peasants were carried into captivity. Heavy tribute was exacted by the savage invaders, and practically the whole of Russia was reduced to chaos.

Subsequently, Russia was divided into two native principalities, and recovery set in when the Papacy, ever anxious to fish in troubled waters incited the Swedes and Brethren of the Sword again to disrupt the country, but each of these was in turn defeated.

In course of time the Tartar danger declined, and when, in 1462, John III. mounted the throne, the greater part of Russia became a single State. The Church lent her aid in restoring law and order and, as the many evils engendered among the clergy were plainly exposed, the heads of the spiritual order endeavoured to purify their own household. As the end of the world had been expected, private churches had been built as offerings to Christ in all parts of Russia, and these had become the haunts of sin and shame. The Metropolitan Theodosius thundered against these pious scandals, and the Pope intervened once more, but without success.

The power of the Church in Russia has been incalculable, but all her efforts to preserve unanimity have proved abortive, and in consequence various heretical sects exist. But within the Greek Church itself orthodoxy has been well maintained. The mass of the people were, and presumably still are, the victims of the grossest superstitions, many of which, despite their Christian disguise, are traceable to a far remote past.

As we have noted, the Greek faith was first founded in Russia in 988. At Kiev, its Metropolitan resided until 1320, when the seat of ecclesiastical authority was transferred to Moscow. Until the time of Peter the Great, the Russian hierarchy was subject, at least in theory, to the Greek Patriarch at Constantinople. When Peter, the reforming autocrat, assumed power, this dependence disappeared. In 1770 Peter promptly suppressed the Moscow Patriarchate, and transferred the Government of the Church to a synod consisting both of bishops and secular dignitaries, all of whom were appointed by the Tsar himself. Thus was the Church made subordinate to State control.

So for all practical purposes matters remained until the Revolution of 1917, when the Church was disestablished and religious equality declared, while a section of Greek Christians restored the deposed Patriarchate at Moscow.

Church property has now passed into the hands of the State, and impartial observers aver that the secular rulers have treasured the many priceless works of art formerly in the Church's possession with far greater solicitude than the clergy ever displayed. It also appears that the Soviet Government grants free leases of Church buildings to representative members of congregations and, although the inculcation of theological dogmas is made illegal in classes, religious instruction may be unreservedly imparted in the home.

T. F. PALMER.

The ambassadors of Recared, the first Catholic King of Spain, respectfully offered, on the threshold of the Vatican, his rich presents of gold and gems; they accepted as a lucrative exchange, the hairs of St. John the Baptist, a cross which enclosed a small piece of the true wood, and a key that contained some particles of iron which had been scraped from the chains of St. Peter.—Gibbon.

## Miracles and Morals

THE questions which every instructed human being ought to put to himself or herself when confronted with the claims of supernaturalism are: "Am I to be tied by the opinion of any other person? Must I embrace the views of those who, by the votes of their fellow-beings, have been placed on the highest pedestals in History? Am I bound to conclude that the claims of supernaturalism are well founded because they have been conceded by millions of people for centuries? Am not I, an independent human unit, entitled to form my own opinion upon matters affecting my own personal destiny? Must I be wrong, for example, because I decline to subscribe to the religious beliefs of Tennyson and Gladstone?"

Many of the great figures of history, brought up in an atmosphere and environment of supernatural belief, when confronted with the problems of existence, the inhumanity, cruelty and greed of wealthy fellow-beings, and the emptiness and wretchedness of the lives of the poor have tormented themselves with questionings arising from doubts of a benevolent Ruler of the Universe; and have turned to inanimate nature for answers to these questionings. They found in that a false consolation, and when they again returned to a contemplation of animate nature they were appalled by the ruthless greed exhibited in a continuous bitter struggle. Animate nature was everywhere red in tooth and claw. There seemed no hope of relief from this sanguinary contest, in which the weakest must go to the wall. They turned away their faces from the solution humbly proffered by naturalists of an ordered scheme of equitable distribution, by which the privations of the poor and wretched could be mitigated and finally removed; and turned again to the "support" of a shadowy belief in a supernatural power that would redress the iniquities and right the wrongs of the present existence in a future one. We need not be surprised that when leading minds adopted such a course, they would have a very considerable following, so that a continuance of belief in the supernatural by a majority would be assured; and the ecclesiasticism which represented the supernatural on earth would continue to be buttressed and fortified.

It may be taken as a settled opinion among Free-thinkers that the main pillars upon which supernaturalism rests are mysticism and miracles; and that these have both been demonstrated to be antagonistic to a system of good morals. It is the appreciation of this position that has led several believers who call themselves modernists to set about explaining away some of the chief miracles of the Bible with the object of establishing a satisfactory ethical system with a supernatural basis. But what sort of a basis can that be which strikes at the very heart of the scheme of redemption? This is the question which at once arises in the minds of Roman Catholics, Salvation Army warriors and Fundamentalists, when they observe the antics of the Modernists. And are not the critics of the Modernists from the purely supernatural point of view perfectly right? The Modernists are not only giving up Trinitarianism and becoming Unitarians. They are denying the Divinity of Christ by denying the miracles of the Immaculate Conception and the Virgin Birth. The Modernists cannot have their cake and eat it. They cannot hunt with the hounds and run with the hare.

Miracles, together with ghosts, fairies and other mythical portents have passed wholly out of the picture in independent and uncompromising modern thought. That kind of thought demonstrates that a man or woman must be one thing or



another: that he or she cannot remain on the fence—cannot stand with one foot in the camp of supernaturalism, and the other in the camp of naturalism. The craving for an etherealized kind of existence cannot evidently be satisfied by the matter-of-factness of science. So the wish becomes the father to the thought, and the imagined takes the place of ascertained truth.

As to the question of good morals, it is first of all necessary to consider what bearing the Immaculate Conception and the Virgin Birth have upon these. Incidentally the measure of good morals achieved by mankind has been so achieved, not by the help of, but in spite of belief in the supernatural. The astute young Jewess Mary (who now, according to Rome, is Queen of Heaven) told a very interesting story, which that simple cuckold, Joseph her husband, immediately accepted about the paternity of her child. Had Joseph not been a cuckold, had he flown into a rage and refused to believe his wife's extremely unlikely story—what would the consequences have been? If Joseph had not been so credulous, and had he made thorough investigations, it is possible that he might have been able to find a co-respondent for a Divorce Suit at his instance much more likely to be amenable to Judicial Authority than the Holy Ghost. There is another alternative. Mary may very well have been with child by her husband Joseph himself; but prompted by their dreams, the scheming pair may have decided to secure notoriety by holding out that Mary was with child by a supernatural male being—an occurrence not likely to be insusceptible of credence even by literate persons, because of earlier historical cases of considerable frequency. Either way, whichever alternative be suggested, the cause of good morals is not advanced, because in the former there is clear violation of natural law and of the sanctity of marital relations; and in the latter there is a clear conspiracy of falsehood to hoodwink the public. And the "public interest" has always been as it is now, the paramount consideration.

Any well read and thinking person need not, however, be surprised that many supernaturalists are uncomfortable about several of the miracles recorded in the Scriptures. It is now realized that the general level of intelligence is higher than it was sixty years since, and if it is possible to retain supernaturalistic belief while sacrificing or explaining away the miracles, the Modernists think a good work will have been accomplished. Unfortunately for them, they are too short-sighted to see that the miraculous is of the very essence of the supernatural. The Fundamentalists are right. If the miracles go, the supernatural must go too. The Ecclesiastical oracles had better beware of the Modernists!

But yet again on this question of good morals: so long as the mind of man is ensnared by the superstition that his improvement—physical, mental or moral—depends upon some power external to himself, so long will improvement be impeded or frustrated. Verily man has to work out his own salvation—not with fear and trembling; but with as much scientific knowledge as he can acquire, with wide-eyed courage and resolute nerves. In this task man gets no help from the Ecclesiastics. When he listens to the Churches, he is assailed by a Babel of voices and a confusion of tongues. When he strives to clear a new path to progress, he is foiled and thwarted by anachronistic traditionalism.

There are historical instances too numerous to detail of the obstructiveness of clericalism to improvements suggested by scientific research. Dirtiness (not cleanliness) has always been next to godliness. Yet there are individual clerics here and there prepared to

jettison a great deal. That genial Padre, "Dick" Sheppard would apparently scrap the whole machinery of Ecclesiasticism if people could just be persuaded that they "need God." Rome, on the other hand, with her megaphonic propagandists, insists that she alone is the trusted depository of the secret remedy of Divinity for the salvation and enlightenment of mankind, and that without implicit faith in her and unquestioning acceptance of her infallibility there is no hope for mankind. Modernists say it matters not how little you believe so long as you are inspired by the Christ-like spirit. The fundamentalist again demands that we believe everything set forth in the Scriptures as incontrovertible fact. Here is the great clash between the old and the new in Theological apologetics! And the ringing of the changes in the pious press is like to deafen us! Gospel Bells! Hell's Bells! Christmas Bells!

There are so many theological controversialists spreading themselves in word spinning competitions that we recognize how the representatives of different faiths—Islam, Judaism, Christianity (in its various manifestations), Spiritualism and Hoodooism, revel in the conflict! One had thought that the great aim was unity among ALL Supernaturalists. Are we to be limited to the achievement of the Union of Christendom as the *summum bonum* and loftiest objective? Nay, must we not amalgamate in one all communions throughout the world, who profess a belief in the supernatural? We must widen our horizons, enlarge our vision and our scope!

And what an amalgam that would be! We recall the old speculative rhyme—If all the seas were one sea, what a great sea that would be! And if all the trees were one tree, what a great tree that would be! Does any Rationalist need to be convinced of the essential puerility of belief in any form of Supernaturalism?

There is a kind of Union that only makes confusion worse confounded. But things seemingly far apart may have essential features in common. If you remove the trappings of Archbishop, Archimandrite, or Pope, you disclose a personality amazingly like the medicine-men and witch-doctors of lands not yet blessed by British Beer and British Bibles!

Only this is to be remarked: that there is nothing maudlin about the medicine-men and witch-doctors of primitive peoples. There is a notable acceptance of the inevitable among such peoples. Say what we like about fatalism, we cannot withhold a meed of admiration from those stoics of the inner world who take their gruel without a whine. But apparently in the higher (so-called) civilizations, supernaturalism must have as its most powerful buttresses—sensationalism and sentimentalism. So we find in the religious "revivals," especially in large centres of population, those overgrown monstrosities of modernism—remarkable instances of wild excitement and rapturous ecstasy. These are the conditions to produce a confusion of tongues if you will!

What man needs is knowledge—not belief. Knowledge, enlightenment, courage and serenity. What he gains he will seek to communicate to others, and from such sources will flow healing waters of compassion and kindness to purge the earth of the present uncleanness of hate, greed, wretchedness and inequitable conditions. Religion is the old, old story of damning these healing waters—of keeping man in a state of abject submission, futility and non-expression. Freethought points the way to emancipation. Faith in Man himself! The remedy of "Only Believe" is discredited by historical evidence.

Faith in Gods is not only failing because of confusion of tongues among the supernaturalists, but also because of the "Herd" System of "Salvation



through the Gospel" having replaced the method of individual approach and individual conversion. And, despite the confidence professed by Christians, who announce a great forthcoming religious revival in the near future, the majority of human beings are not impressed. The only way out into Liberty and well-being, physical, intellectual and moral, is the way of Freethought—the substitution of Clearness for Confusion.

IGNOTUS.

## Acid Drops

In the "Views and Opinions" for January 13, there was dealt with the comments of a schoolmaster on the proposal to review the books in use in the I.C.C. Schools, in order to secure an impartial account of things to place before the "young idea." This was denounced by one headmaster as an attempt to use the schools in the interests of a political party. We are indebted to the *New Statesman* for the following from one of the books used at present in the London schools. It is from Brendon's *Britain and Her Neighbours* :—

... it was generally hoped in Western Europe that the revolution would have the result of increasing the effectiveness of Russia's participation in the war. The hope was doomed to disappointment. The people, intoxicated by freedom, lost their heads, and allowed themselves to be duped by the specious promises of certain extreme revolutionaries. The latter, led by Lenin, a German agent, supported by German money, quickly usurped power. . . . The Russian peasants drank in Lenin's words, and his alluring promises soon infected the navy and army. . . . Lenin was thus able to achieve the purpose of his German masters. . . . Man is naturally acquisitive; and his acquisitive instinct, his determination to possess, is a great incentive to human progress; it is the motive power which drives the wheels of industry and commerce. The Bolsheviks, by destroying private property, destroyed all property in Russia. They left nothing for the community to share, and so reduced the whole country to a condition of indescribable misery. . . . The government established by the Bolsheviks was, nominally, a *soviet* government. . . . In effect, this so-called majority rule was rule by a ruthless and corrupt minority, upheld by an army of foreign mercenaries.

"Lenin and his German masters," the "army of foreign mercenaries" in the pay of Russia, is too good to spoil by any comment.

From the *Beginner's History of England* is taken this concerning Italy, also calculated to satisfy the impartiality of Hitler and Mosley :—

The movement arose as a measure of protection against the forces of Communism and revolution. Finland led the way by raising over 100,000 White Guards to maintain social order. Next Hungary put down the Red Terror, and Germany grappled successfully with the Spartacists. Italy was in graver danger, for her northern provinces seethed with Communism, and openly proclaimed the doctrines of the Russian Bolsheviks. . . . Then Signor Mussolini came forward and organized the forces of counter-revolution. In 1919 he formed the first Fascist companies or "fighting bands of social order," and all that was best in the young manhood of Italy rallied to his side. . . .

Nor do we imagine that anyone will hold that the following from Mr. Brendon is likely to give boys a passion for looking at the Indian question with an intelligently open mind :—

If the British have ruled wisely, they have also ruled unselfishly, and have consistently allowed the natives to take a larger and larger share in the management of their own affairs. . . . Unfortunately, many Indians have failed to see the advantages, and have blinded themselves to the intentions of British rule, and many extremists urge that everything British should be driven from the country.

That should meet with the strong approval of Mr. Winston Churchill, at all events.

The newspapers announce that it will cost three million pounds to "dam the Thames." Great Scott! Why, we have heard the whole "Plan of Salvation" damned for nothing at all. How values vary!

A picture in the newspapers depicted the moving of the Statue of King William IV. from its site facing London Bridge. The picture shows the workmen putting a rope round the neck of King William! And not a single letter of protest appeared in any of the papers from "Retired Colonel," or "Pro Patria." This is monstrous; at least the rope might have been put round the waist; or below the shoulders. But round the neck! And in the year of the Jubilee of George V.! And no protests! Perhaps the Rear-Admiral who wanted a two minutes silence proclaimed after the King's Christmas speech will ask a question in the House of Commons.

The *Daily Telegraph* published the other day an article by Sir Cecil Harcourt-Smith on the influence on taste and fashion of the wedding presents to the Duke and Duchess of Kent. Fashion, certainly. But what has taste to do with it? Why if the Duke of Kent went round with one leg of his trousers blue and the other red, it would be widely copied. And if the Duchess took to having midnight cocktail parties in her motor-car, that would at once become the *fashion*. But taste!

The *Daily Express* publishes a special article, in which it lays down the law that if people will keep slim they will be able to do good thinking. Mr. G. K. Chesterton says—!!!

Mr. James Douglas has discovered that the world has lost Jesus. What a careless lot of people there are about, to be sure. People are always losing Jesus or finding him, losing God or finding him. The ancient Jews used to carry their God about in a box. Perhaps the reason for it was that Gods always had a habit of getting lost. But we dare swear that there will be more genuine regret experienced by a man whom loses a pound on the Derby than is felt by any man who has just "lost God."

There seems to be a curious society in existence which calls itself the "Evolution Protest Movement." The only "movement" about it that we can detect is the resolve to stand still, and when one of its leaders is that great intellectual light, the Rev. Dimsdale Young, we can understand its peculiar conception of "movement." This august body issues the following :—

Christianity sanctifies the individual and the time, evolution glorifies the herd and is the parent of Socialism and Communism. In Russia evolution has supplanted Christianity, and Darwin is the new Messiah.

Now if that doesn't make creep the flesh of old ladies, in and out of the pulpit, they must be shock-proof. As James Douglas would probably advise, everyone ought to write home to his, or her, mother about it.

Lord Snowden writes an article in the *Sunday Dispatch* in favour of increased armaments. He says, with truth, that the outstanding feature of the International Conference "has not been how to prevent war, but the acceptance of war as an instrument of national policy." But he quotes Lord Fisher as saying, "You talk about humanizing war. You might as well try to Christianize hell." The parallel is not quite warranted. After all, if it had not been for Christianity hell would not have been nearly so well known or so thickly populated. Of course, it is correct to say that hell cannot be Christianized in the sense of being populated by Christians. In that connexion Christianity has acted as selective factor, since it has sent all real Christians to heaven, and one suspects that the large number of eminent men and women who have been sent to hell because they were not Christians must have regarded the respective power of the Churches as so much to the good. Or perhaps, we might argue that people are sent to heaven as a punishment for being



Christians. It is a very vexed question, and perhaps Sir James Jeans, or Sir Ambrose Fleming might throw some light on the subject.

The parson in charge of St. John's, Hampton Wick, is providing a free breakfast for those attending early morning service. We like that idea, and it is capable of indefinite extension. Why not issue a coupon or a picture card to all attending any service, with a scale of exchange values? So many tickets might admit to the local Cinema, or a seat on the grand stand at the Derby, or a week in Switzerland, or a cruise round the world, or even a year's subscription to the *Freethinker*. We feel there is a great deal in this, and properly worked, almost any Church in the country could be filled.

Religion, like other things, has its fashions. Once upon a time a man who caught a glimpse of the next world would have seen angels flitting round the great white throne. At a later date he would have heard music indescribable in its beauty. (Religiously there is nothing quite so satisfactorily religious as something that is illimitable in its magnitude, indescribable in its beauty, unhearable in the glorious quality of its sound, and untouchable in its solidity.) Nowadays we have the next world peopled with folk that are just like those we know here, with not a glimpse of wings, or a sound of harps, everything as commonplace as an oration by the Prime Minister. All that is wanted in the heaven that is seen to day are Belisha Beacons and Picture Palaces to make it seem just like "Home from Home."

In the case of the old man whose "heart stopped" during an operation, but was set going again—by ordinary massage—the vision of heaven reported in the papers ran true to form. This man, an old market gardener, and evidently a firm believer, saw, when just losing or just regaining consciousness, a vision of heaven as it is in 1935. He saw everybody he knew, including his dead wife, nicely dressed, and, of course, everybody was happy. But it is noticeable that he did not see a single Hindoo, or Red Indian, not a Chinaman or Esquimaux, not even Italians or Turks. They all seemed to be nice quiet, respectable, comfortable Britishers. One can hardly expect the rest of the world's inhabitants to have a heaven. Heaven seems to be a British mandated territory.

The parsons generally have made the most of this new revelation, and one of them, Rev. Joseph Scarlett, says that the "fear" of death has now been removed. *The fear of Death!* Dislike to dying may always exist, and even that may be exaggerated, but what has fear to do with it? That element comes from such religions as Christianity. The Christian Church first of all introduces a poison into the human system, and then makes a splendid thing of selling a doubtful antidote for it.

Dr. J. H. Oldham, the Presbyterian Secretary of the International Missionary Council is very much upset at the plight of German Missionaries in various parts of the world. They wanted about £30,000 a month to keep the Gospel flag flying, and Dr. Oldham did not think our own missionary societies could help to that extent. Here again one wonders which to admire most, the cool way we have of spending hundreds of thousands of pounds of our money on the quite useless work of "converting" natives or the attempt of the Germans, finding the supply cut off from their own country, to get England to finance their equally useless work. Why can't this money—every halfpenny of it—be spent in this country for the benefit of the many thousands of people who want it? The missionary ramp gets more impudent every day.

Catholics are already forming plans for the next election. Archbishop Mostyn, for example, said at St. Helen's, Barry, the other day, that, "We have rights as Catholic citizens, and I venture to say that at the next General Election no candidate for Parliament will receive a Catholic vote unless he is prepared to uphold our

Catholic rights as regards the Catholic education of our Catholic children." This pronouncement, which must be taken seriously, shows that Catholics realize their power and can wield it. And we call attention to it because there are still some non-Christians who claim the fight is over. It is not; Freethought—and Secular Education—has still a tremendous battle before it.

Abbot Hunter-Blair, in a sympathetic account of General Gordon, says:—

He was a man of the deepest piety, but no trained antiquarian, he had formed the singular and (I think) unsupported theory as to the exact locality of the Crucifixion, which he expounded to me at great length and with extraordinary enthusiasm. I thought his theory quite erroneous.

What a pity the Abbot does not tell us why—and why the spot he believes to have been the one upon which the Crucifixion took place, really was the genuine one. Faith could prove both equally well. But what about facts?

Attempts to extend divorce facilities are being made in the Philippine Islands. Here are some of the reasons given by a pious deputation against the movement:—

The Bill in question is out of place in a country eminently Catholic like ours. . . . Above all, it will undermine the stability and solid foundation of our familiar institutions, which by all means should be preserved precisely during these trying times in which we are at the threshold of a new era in our history.

Thus once again is the reactionary policy of the Roman Catholic evident, wherever and whenever it gets the chance. Our own long fight in the matter of divorce reform is due almost entirely to the opposition of the Churches. Still common-sense is bound to prevail both here and in the Philippines. For divorce reform is what the people want.

Mr. Belloc has decided he will not reply to Dr. Coulton. He thinks Dr. Coulton has now become a "confirmed fanatic," and "to attempt reasoned argument with a confirmed fanatic is worse than waste of time." Mr. Belloc also does not like "indulging Dr. Coulton's taste in Billingsgate." To outsiders like ourselves, however, the controversy really resolves itself not into an exchange of epithets, but as to whether certain statements Mr. Belloc makes about the Reformation and other religious questions have any basis in history or not. Dr. Coulton says they have not; and Mr. Belloc says he doesn't like being called names; which is not much of a reply. No doubt, however, Catholics will find it adequate, and continue believing Mr. Belloc. But other people won't.

Following in the wake of Roman Catholics, the Archbishop of Canterbury headed a deputation which sought to impose a more drastic censorship on films and the film industry. We were glad to see that, in spite of the horrifying report by the Archbishop that many films "made a special feature of crime, cruelty, and loose morality," the Prime Minister had the courage to turn down the deputation; and to insist that the Government could do nothing in the matter. This is the only kind of direct snub these busybodies and old women of the Churches can understand. The censorship of films in any case is fairly strong, and nobody wants it in the hands of a crowd of extra pious cranks.

The Rev. Archibald Fleming says: "Make the critics a present, if you like, of all the miracles, of all the literary contradictions in the witness of these four simple-minded recorders, make them a present of all the difficulties about dates and genealogies and so forth—and you still have remaining the fact that no man ever spake as He spake." Mr. Fleming is very generous in making all these concessions. If he means that he surrenders all the claims to historicity and miracle, he leaves behind nothing at all but "Words, words, words." That, of course, provides the only safe religion nowadays.



# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

## EDITORIAL:

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

Telephone No. : CENTRAL 2412.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

A. HEMINGWAY.—A judge is not bound to point out to a witness that he may affirm if he objects to taking an oath. But a judge, who happened to be at the same time a gentleman, would do all he could to assist a witness in such a position, and would point to him his legal rights.

S.L.—You must decide for yourself, but we have stated our own opinion many times, which is that no parent is morally justified in turning his children into gramophonic repetitions of his own opinions in politics, sociology or religion.

W. JAMESON.—The complaint against the clergy is not that as individual citizens they supported the last war. As we have so often said, on that ground there is no more to be said for or against the clergy than applies to other individuals. The charge is that they used their influence, as clergymen, to glorify war; praised its religious character and moralized its barbarities. We note what you say about the B.B.C. sermons. Hundreds of letters are written them, and are, as far as the public is concerned, ignored. And as to the B.B.C. permitting a discussion between a real Freethinker and one of their parsons, well, you are living in England, not in Utopia.

T. GADEN.—As we know nothing about God, and therefore, nothing about what kind of a mind he, or it, has, we have never complained that man's mind is not equal to that of God's. You appear to be better informed on the mind of God. We congratulate you.

C. MARTIN.—Thanks for cuttings. The rev. gentleman is marvellously full of the spirit of "uplift." We commend to him the 100,000 people who are living in basements. If their "uplift" extended only to the ground floor, it would be a big change for the better.

*The offices of the National Secular Society and the Secular Society Limited, are now at 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Telephone: Central 1357.*

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

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

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*One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.*

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## Sugar Plums

To-day (February 3) Mr. Cohen will speak in the McLellan Galleries, Glasgow, at 7.0, on "How Science Explains Religion." On Monday evening he will lecture in Edinburgh, in the Oddfellows' Hall, Forest Road, on "The Case for Freethought," and will travel home on Monday night to be at the office to see the *Freethinker* through the press. Then, as Pepys would say, home and to bed.

We have attended nearly every one of the National Secular Society's Dinners, but we do not recall one that was more completely enjoyable than that of Saturday last (January 26). The Venetian Chamber, with its many rows of happy faces, and the beautifully decorated tables, presented a picture that invited enjoyment. From start to finish everything went with a swing. There were a large number of newcomers present, who more than made up

for those who were prevented attending through illness. That augured well for the future of our movement, all the more that many of the newcomers were of the new generation. Of the older one, we were delighted to see that veteran, Mr. A. B. Moss, whose enthusiasm for the cause brings him out whenever it is possible, and who appears as strong in his support of Freethought as when he first wrote and spoke in its behalf some sixty years ago. And among the laymen, Mr. Deakin, at the age of 87, was welcome and conspicuous. If the younger generation of Freethinkers wear as well, mentally and physically, we may rest content. They can hardly do better in spirit, whatever they may do in act.

After the dinner speeches and songs and music and "performances" filled up the time until nearly 11.30, and never did hours fly more rapidly. From beginning to end there was not a dull moment. The speeches were witty, eloquent, forceful, and to the point. They all touched a very high level. And the entertainment, under the management of Mr. Royle, established a record. All we have to say in criticism of the artistes is that it is rather cruel on people who have just eaten a good dinner to subject them to such a strain as Mr. Brunning did in his impersonation of Lloyd George, and Mr. Will Kings, in his skit on a B.B.C. Broadcaster. People laughed till they almost cried, and we watched several of our old friends with some anxiety lest they should wind up with a fit. As to the exhibition of pocket-picking by Mr. "Giovanni," that had to be seen to be believed. The way he emptied the pockets of his victims of money, cigar cases, pens, wallets, took wrist-watches from their arms, and even braces from one man's shoulders, all in view of the audience, and with none of the despoiled ones conscious of their losses, made the rest of the people hang on to their possessions until the wizard had bowed his way out. It was an evening that will live long in the memory of all. Mr. Rosetti worked hard to make the dinner a success and he met with the desired reward.

One of the guests at the Dinner handed to the Chairman a cutting from a newspaper dated April 12, 1900. Not very long ago, but the paper contained an item that showed how far we have travelled between then and now. Some one had accused the Holborn Restaurant of providing dinners—not public dinners—on Sundays. In reply Mr. T. J. Hamp, managing director of the Holborn Restaurant, wrote an indignant denial. He said:—

The Holborn Restaurant, during its twenty-six years' existence, has never opened its doors on Sunday, and under the present management, never will. As a matter of fact, we gave a definite promise to the local justices, when in 1874 applying for the licence, never to ask for a seven days' licence.

The good Mr. Hamp has, we expect, passed to the land where Sundays never end, or has changed his mind, or is no longer in control. Otherwise, we expect his withers would have been unwrung, his conscience outraged, his soul seared, and his religious sense wounded by the presence of the wicked, but decidedly jolly, party that assembled at the Holborn Restaurant on January 26.

The Minister has certified, and under the Act of Parliament his certificate has the force of law. This was the substance of a recent decision by a London Magistrate concerning the Belisha crossings. It represents one of the most drastic inroads that are being made on the liberty of the individual. Until recent years any citizen could appeal to the courts for protection against the arbitrary or unwarranted action of a public official. To-day this protection against abuse is being whittled away steadily, and any jack-in-office becomes a miniature Hitler or Mussolini. It is true that the punishment meted out is not quite so brutal as those meted out by the two persons named, but the principle is the same. We protest vigorously against dictatorship, while we create numbers of petty dictators under other names. And if we are to have a dictatorship, we prefer it to be limited to as few people as possible. There are fewer to clear out, by forcible or by other means; and against dictatorship force is the only means of protest which the dictator leaves open,



A lengthy and appreciative review of Mr. Bedborough's *Arms and the Clergy*, appears in the *Socialist Standard* for January. The number of reviews given of this book is the best testimony of its value. In our judgment it is the most deadly attack that has been made against the clergy for some time. It indicts the clergy in their own words, and with a full reference for every statement cited. We should like every reader of this paper to purchase one spare copy at least for use among their acquaintances. It is as good a piece of propagandist work as anything now before the public.

Birkenhead saints will have an opportunity of hearing Mr. A. D. McLaren, who will speak for the local N.S.S. Branch to-day (February 3), in the Boilermakers' Hall, Argyle Street, at 7 p.m. Mr. McLaren always has something useful and interesting to say, and his visit should attract a full house, and add another very successful evening to the efforts of the local Branch.

## A Clerical Falstaff

(Concluded from page 21)

Sydney Smith's kingdom, where he reigned without a rival for more than forty years, was the social world of London; his throne was at the dinner-table; his subjects were of all classes, all ages and all sexes (of which he said there were three—men, women and clergymen.) (Hesketh Pearson: *The Smith of Smiths*, p. 252.)

SYDNEY SMITH left Edinburgh for London, at the earnest appeal of his wife, who felt there were no future prospects for him in Scotland. At first he experienced hard times, even to his wife selling the jewels she had recently inherited from her mother. He preached occasionally, but says that "the greater part of the congregation thought me mad," and "the clerk was as pale as death in helping me off with my gown, for fear I should bite him." Also he was known to have written for the *Edinburgh Review*, and this set the Tories and the aristocracy against him. At last he found a friend in Sir Thomas Bernard, who got him appointed preacher at the Foundling Hospital, and a little later at Berkeley Chapel, Mayfair, which his sermons quickly filled to overflowing. He was asked to deliver a sermon in the Temple Church. He chose Toleration, and spoke in favour of Catholic Emancipation; the congregation were furious. Lord Henly said he deserved the Star Chamber, and attempts were made to prevent him from preaching again in Berkeley Chapel.

Again Sir Thomas Bernard came to the rescue by getting him appointed to give a series of lectures on Moral Philosophy at the Royal Institution, for £200. Sydney knew very little about Moral Philosophy, but he would have lectured upon anything for that price, and notwithstanding his ignorance of the subject (or perhaps because of it?) the first lecture was an immense success, and he became the talk of the town, so that during the later lectures the neighbourhood was blocked with carriages, and not a seat was to be had for love or money.

Sydney was surprised and delighted with his success, which he described as "the most successful swindle of the season," and "had created such an uproar as I never remember to have been excited by any other literary imposture."<sup>1</sup> His writings in the *Edinburgh Review*, and his success in London, introduced him to the brilliant society of Holland House, the centre of fashion and wit in the London of that day; and where he soon established a reputation as the most celebrated conversationalist and wit of his time. Sydney had not an atom of shyness in his com-

position, and never changed his opinions for the sake of popularity, says Mr. Pearson: "but spoke his mind freely before any Duke or Lord who happened to be present, which did not increase his chances of preferment."

This did not last long. Lady Holland prevailed on Erskine, the Lord Chancellor, to present Sydney with a living, which he did by giving him the living of Foston-le-Clay in Yorkshire. Sydney went to thank the Chancellor: "Oh, don't thank me, Mr. Smith," said Erskine: "I gave you the living because Lady Holland insisted on my doing so; and if she had desired me to give it to the devil, he must have had it."<sup>2</sup> Thus at the age of 38 he was banished from the London he loved, to the country, which he hated, Foston being two hundred miles distant. He did not go without a struggle, and made many efforts then and afterwards to exchange his living for one nearer London, but he was destined to spend twenty years there, before he became canon residentiary of St. Paul's Cathedral.

However, once settled down, Sydney threw all his abounding energy into his work and became farmer and doctor as well as vicar, to say nothing of writing the famous *Peter Plymley Letters*, and other vigorous polemical works, and keeping up an enormous correspondence with the friends he had made in London and Scotland. To those, like the present writer, who are only acquainted with Sydney Smith's published works—they consist of over eight hundred pages of small print in our edition—Mr. Pearson's work will come as a surprise. For although there is a good deal of satire and some wit, it is nothing to be compared with the wealth of humour and brilliant wit which Mr. Pearson has gleaned from Sydney's letters, and from his sayings recorded in the *Memoirs* and letters of his contemporaries. There is hardly a page of the three hundred pages of his book but what contains some gem of wit or humour; yet this is only a selection from a larger store. Towards the end of his last illness Sydney asked his regular correspondents to return his letters, and many did so, as he said they were liable to be misunderstood; and considering the very unclerical contents of some of those which have been preserved, we cannot be surprised at this precaution.

At Foston, fresh from London, he says: "not knowing a turnip from a carrot, I was compelled to farm three hundred acres, and without capital to build a parsonage." At first he lost money on farming; writing to a friend, he says: "We are told that Man is not to live by bread alone; this is comfortable, for there will be very little of it this year."

Sydney bought a horse which he named Calamity, for, he says: "Somehow or other my horse and I had a habit of parting company. On one occasion I found myself suddenly prostrate in the streets of York, much to the delight of the Dissenters. Another time my horse Calamity flung me over his head into a neighbouring parish, as if I had been a shuttlecock, and I felt grateful it was not into a neighbouring planet."

Here, the knowledge of medicine he had picked up in his spare time, sufficient for simple ailments, came in useful. The villagers liked being doctored by him because he never mixed the Thirty-nine Articles with them, says Mr. Pearson, and did not give them moral lectures on their sinfulness. At breakfast one morning, when a poor woman came begging him to christen a new-born infant, as she thought it was dying:—

<sup>1</sup> Hesketh Pearson: *The Smith of Smiths*, pp. 97-98.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 140.



Sydney left his breakfast at once and went off to the cottage. On his return he was questioned about the infant. "Why," he said, "I first gave it a dose of castor-oil, and then christened it; so now the poor child is ready for either world." . . . he thought very highly of his *materia medica*: "Everybody who comes is expected to take a little something; I consider it a delicate compliment when my guests have a slight illness here." (p. 198.)

In March, 1825, the clergy held a meeting at the "Three Tuns," Thirsk, to petition Parliament against Catholic emancipation. He spoke against the petition, and proposed one of his own, for which he had only two supporters, and, says Mr. Pearson: "told his reverend brethren exactly what he thought of them." A month later, at another meeting of the clergy, held for the same purpose; at the "Tiger Inn," Beverley, Sydney again spoke, this time in a minority of one, his own curate opposing him: "My excellent and respectable curate, Mr. Milestones, alarmed at the effect of the Pope upon the East Riding, has come here to oppose me," Sydney informed the meeting, "and there he stands, breathing war and vengeance on the Vatican." In truth, Mr. Milestones had asked Sydney whether he would resent the public opposition of his own curate, and Sydney assured him that far from creating animosity on his part, it would only increase his regard and respect for him.

Always ready to get the views of all classes, he asked the servants at the "Tiger Inn" what they thought of the question, and reported their views to a friend: "The chambermaid was decidedly for the Church of England. Boots was for the Catholics. The waiter said he had often (God forgive him) wished them both confounded together."

Sydney's predecessors at Foston seemed to him to have been somewhat lethargic, for, he relates: "When I began to thump the cushion of my pulpit on first coming to Foston, as is my wont when I preach, the accumulated dust of a hundred and fifty years made such a cloud that for some minutes I lost sight of my congregation." He said that peoples' attention was easily distracted in Church, and declared that "a sparrow fluttering about the church is an antagonist which the most profound theologian in Europe is wholly unable to overcome." But life at Foston was, for Sydney an exile, a martyrdom. It would be impossible, says Mr. Pearson, to overrate his love of London, of its noise, its bustle, its streets, its mansions and shops:—

What had been made by the hand of man was to him infinitely more wonderful and desirable than Nature. His conception of Paradise was the "parallelogram" at the height of the season, which he pictured lovingly—an immense square full of trees flowering with flambeau, with gas for grass, every window illuminated by countless chandeliers, and voices reiterating for ever and for ever, Mr. Sydney *Smith Coming Upstairs*. (p. 252.)

When the news spread that he was on the stairs, there was a move to greet him, and he would not be left alone for an instant. Towards the end of his life his social popularity was enormous. With one accord, says Mr. Pearson, "the memorists of the period state emphatically that no printed report of his conversation could give the least idea of the effect he produced in society. It was not only what he said, but how he said it," his voice, his mannerisms, the expression of his face:—

He would begin with a chance observation on some topic of the moment; this in an instant suggested a ludicrous image, which begat another and another, and another, each following the last

with such rapidity that there was scarcely time to laugh. Gradually a conception of such staggering absurdity was formed in the minds of his listeners that they were shaken by paroxysms of helpless hysterical merriment, and the full imaginative picture, capped by some master-stroke of comedy left them gasping for breath. (Hesketh Pearson. *The Smith of Smiths*, p. 254.)

Once, breakfasting with Tom Moore, the poet, Sydney made Moore cry with laughing, and caused him to leave the table in fits of laughter. Lord Dudley describes a dinner at which Sydney was present: "I laughed myself almost to death, answered as well as I could, when laughter would allow me, and we passed a very pleasant evening." Mrs. Siddons, the great tragedy queen of the stage, who maintained her tragic pose in Society, found Sydney's humour too much for her gravity. Sir James Mackintosh, we are told, rolled on the floor in fits of laughter.

Queen Victoria used to go into fits of laughter at the sayings of Sydney, which were repeated to her by Lord Melbourne. This, of course, was before her widowhood. Again, Tom Moore records, "Left Lord John's [Russell] with Sydney and Luttrell, and when we got to Cockspur Street (having laughed all the way) we were all three seized with such cachinations at something (I forget what) which Sydney said, that we were obliged to separate, and reel each his own way with the fit." Lord Brougham declared: "I have seen him at Foston (his living near York) drive the servants from the room with the tears running down their faces, in peals of inextinguishable laughter." The staid and solemn Brougham did not approve of it, and added: "but he was too much of a jack-pudding."

We propose to give some samples of his humour and wit in our next.

W. MANN.

## A Polite Poetic Effusion to All Christian Nations

or

MANKIND'S PILGRIM'S PROGRESS (see the *Times*, January 7, 1935, on Reducing the Effect of Poison Gases)

HAIL, Muse! or anything that brings out rhymes,  
What ho! Look here, this record in the *Times*,  
Culled from "The Retail Chemist," and complete  
With tips and hints for burning hands and feet,  
For groggy throats, for eyes that stream with tears,  
For reddening skin, for chafed and blistered ears.  
The Chymist's shop will hand out all your needs.  
When flocks of flying soldiers do their deeds.

Hail, Muse! What! Dumb? Then I must get along  
Without your aid. Help then the noisy throng  
Who bellow from the pulpit, press and stews,  
Of Fudge flounced up, of anti-human views.  
We were a nation, suckled on a creed,  
Purest of pure, what all the world must need.  
With it the highest wisdom and its might  
Led us from darkness into blinding light.

Yes, blinding light, I wrote, where we may crawl  
Among the squalor from the sky let fall.  
And all the prayers and all the creeds well taught  
Bring us to this, bring us to less than naught.  
Two thousand years, and shepherds like the sands  
In numbers preached, in numbers laid on hands.  
And we arrive—mankind must be an ass  
If it accepts this long last gift of gas.

CHRISTOPHER GAY.



## The Thirty-Eighth Annual Dinner

OF THE  
NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

IN spite of the inclement weather, the gathering of members and friends of the N.S.S., at the Holborn Restaurant, on Saturday, January 26, was one of the largest on record. Contingents from Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, Colchester, King's Lynn, and other Provincial centres, joined their London comrades in what proved to be an exceptionally successful evening. Many of the old—but really ever young—members (like Arthur B. Moss) were happy to meet each other again; while the large number of young people of both sexes present had the opportunity of noting the enthusiasm shown for the cause of Freethought, not merely by the Society as a whole, but by all those who had put many years of active work to its service. The one dominant note, indeed, of all the speakers at the Dinner, and of all those who took the opportunity of exchanging views, was that never in the history of our Society was the work of uncompromising Freethought more necessary than at the present moment. For the rest, the gathering was happy and informal—more like a family party than of a large number of people who only met infrequently.

The Address of the President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, was in his best form. His remarks were listened to with great attention, only broken by the laughter which rippled round the hall when some witty sally or humorous comment broke the seriousness of the speech. He referred first to the unavoidable absence of a number of old members, but balanced this by noting many new ones who were with us for the first time. He felt that on the whole the work of the Society had been very satisfactory during the past year. More members had joined, some old ones had dropped off, taking with them the impress of Freethought; but it required more than ordinary enthusiasm to work over a long period for a cause which offered no immediate material benefit or social advancement. There were not many reform movements from Birth Control to Cremation, which had not been started by or recruited from Freethinkers. Life was not exactly a pilgrimage—rather was it a procession on a road strewn with pitfalls, but which was made more fertile and more beautiful because of the army of reformers that had marched over it.

Mr. Cohen thought there was a general weakening of religion, and never since the Reformation had the intellectual calibre of the clergy been so low, if we took as a standard some of the great theologians of the seventeenth century. He agreed with Bradlaugh, that in substance, the ultimate fight would be between Roman Catholicism and Freethought; but in his time the situation was not exactly that of to-day. People did not like then to be thought intolerant. Nowadays we are faced with a bigger problem and a more pressing danger. Freethought was challenged not only in relation to religion but also in science, politics, education and social freedom, in the name of human betterment. In a large part of Europe Freethought had practically disappeared. People seem to be content to be slaves under a "leader." Leadership, of course, is essential, but not over a gang of slaves who dare not speak their thoughts. Mass thinking is impossible. Thinking must be individual, or it does not exist. Dictatorships mean bullies at the top, cowards at the bottom, and with a layer of hypocrites in between. He was convinced that the present clouds would pass. Freethought had faced many enemies in the past, and conquered. And it

would conquer its present enemies if Freethinkers remained true to the traditions they had inherited.

The toast to the National Secular Society was proposed by Mrs. Janet Chance in a delightful little speech full of humour. She proposed it with all her heart, as she was fully in sympathy with the ideas for which our Society stood. There were many important issues, and on these Secularism spoke with no equivocal voice. She had no patience with many of the ideas which were brought so reverently forward by our bishops, and which should have been dead and buried, as, indeed, they are in Russia. Mrs. Chance gave a description of one of the Churches in Russia, its dirty priest and ikons, and the way in which women were still bolstering up the faith there; and she was glad to think of how our work was helping to destroy that kind of thing here.

After the toast was drunk with acclamation, Dr. Carmichael rose to support it, his many witty illustrations causing roars of laughter. He felt that the chief function of our Society was that of an intellectual and moral filter to remove all the "undesirables"—leaving them as a residue which could be handed over to the Salvation Army. Ours was a great and noble cause, and the issue of our fight was certain.

The toast of "Freethought at Home and Abroad" was proposed by Lord Snell, who felt that the situation had been so ably described by the Chairman that he need add but little. But both here and abroad the position of Freethought was more uncertain than at any time in his experience. In his youth, we were moved by Mill and the great Libertarians to fight for Liberty, and we thought early in the century we had to some extent succeeded. He felt that nowadays Liberty meant nothing at all to numbers of young people fully content with their cinema, football and other amusements. They sat down quietly while liberty was assailed in a way which would have roused our fathers' resentment. Lord Snell was certain that the National Secular Society would stand as it always did, for Liberty and Freethought in their widest application.

The toast having been drunk, Dr. Har Dayal rose to support it. He did so with pleasure, as he felt rather optimistic. Freethought was spreading East and West. Turkey—superstition-ridden Turkey—had the light and our ideas were spreading even in India, the home of superstition and theology. But side by side with the growth of Freethought there was also the growth of mysticism, much of which had been imported from the East. And against this Europeans had to be on their guard. The East had learned much from the West. In India the name of Bradlaugh was deeply revered, and the writings of Mr. Cohen were also well known. But the East might take its revenge on the West by importing here its own religious and mystical doctrines, and there would be small profit in cleansing the Thames, if before we knew where we were, it was flooded with Ganges' mud. Dr. Dayal spoke as a champion of Science, and he concluded by pointing out that Freethought was the basis of the new civilization, so that one could speak the thing he thought.

All the speeches were listened to with the utmost attention, and, in their individual ways, proved how passionately the ideas fought for so long by the N.S.S. had permeated thinking people.

As for the Dinner, this proved excellent in every way, and was thoroughly enjoyed by all the guests. The Concert was again in the capable hands of Mr. George Royle, who can always be depended upon to find excellent talent. Indeed, it is difficult to say which turn proved most popular as all were so good and so thoroughly appreciated. Miss Emmy Joyce's delightful singing and playing awoke a hearty re-



sponse in the audience. Miss Eva Cobbett's pianoforte solos proved her a fine technician. Both Miss Gladys Merredew and Mr. Will Kings caused hearty laughter by their excellent stories and songs. Mr. Harry Brunning's make-up as a very famous politician delivering a fatuous political speech was something new and was a splendidly-acted piece of satire. Messrs Cole and Stanley sang some popular tunes with fine artistry. Finally Giovanni, with the help of more or less unwilling members of the audience, astonished everybody by an exhibition of "light fingering"—or, put more bluntly, pick-pocketing—which caused perhaps even more astonishment to his helpers than to the audience. How he managed to transfer the contents of a large number of pockets into his own, nobody being the wiser, was a feat to be seen and remembered. His turn was truly "miraculous."

All the arrangements for the setting of the tables (including the beautiful floral display) were carried through without a hitch; only those who know what an amount of work this involves will appreciate the work done by those responsible.

And so once again—a happy reunion of Free-thinkers and their friends ended—like so many others, to remain a delightful memory.

H. CUTNER.

### On The Library Table

THERE are very few people nowadays who are prepared to think things out for themselves. That, at any rate, is the impression which one gets from a reading of the correspondence columns of the daily papers, and from a discussion with the people whom one meets in the course of one's work. Thinking is not popular: it is a difficult task, and most people shirk difficult tasks. And yet, if we are to see the world as it really is, to achieve those ends which we know to be good, we must be prepared to think hard about fundamental problems.

Philosophy, naturally enough, is regarded by the ordinary man as difficult stuff, beyond his comprehension. And yet we must all have a philosophy of life if we are to get anywhere at all, and for that reason those authors who try to put in readable form their ideas of the world of thought deserve our thanks. This week, I have been reading a book which should be read by everyone who feels the importance of this. It is Mr. Chapman Cohen's *Primitive Survivals in Modern Thought* (Pioneer Press, cloth 2s. 6d., paper 1s. 6d.).

Mr. Cohen has been at some pains to put his ideas into order, and this entirely excellent little book is the result. It deals with all spheres of intellectual life—politics, religion, science, art, philosophy, and discusses the issues which are raised with an admirable clarity. Of course, all readers will not agree with everything which Mr. Cohen says: I expect that Mr. Cohen himself would be disappointed if they did. The book is quite definitely controversial, but its controversy is valuable, in that our very disagreement with some parts of the volume impels us to think for ourselves. I am not, I imagine, mistaken, when I say that this was the principal aim which the author had in view in writing the book—to make his readers think.

Much of it, he says, will be considered mere, hair-splitting by those lazy folk who like to have their thinking done for them. But, he adds, "if more people had been prepared to split hairs in the past, how many split heads might have been avoided?" Neatly expressed, and very much to the point.

So few of us nowadays are prepared to exert our reason. Aimless emotionalism is so much easier. And the result can be seen on every side. Look at politics to-day. Are not political parties far more eager to find a loud and splendidly emotional slogan than they are to make a good case which can be argued to the electorate? The question only needs to be asked for the answer to be obvious. The same thing, too, applies to many other

spheres of action, though it is, perhaps, in politics that the argument holds most strongly.

If Mr. Cohen, in his task of impelling his fellow-citizens to think, can only succeed, the world will be a better place for it. That is the reason why I have given space to a discussion of these issues this week. He is, I would add, an admirable example of the virtues of logical thought, for, whether we agree with him, or not, there is no misunderstanding him. He is forthright and he is interesting. His style, without being florid or ornamental, is distinctive and individual. *Primitive Survivals in Modern Thought*, then, is a book to read and a book to keep. It gives much food for thought to people of all political parties and to people of none, to people of all religions and to people of none. In fact, it is a "tract for the times" which we should all do well to heed. The Pioneer Press are to be congratulated upon issuing it at a price which will bring it within the reach of all.

Bristol Guardian and Gazette.

### Religion and the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire

RECENTLY our branch of the Historical Association had a lecture on this subject by a Professor of History in the University of London. He is well known through his lectures and wireless talks as a fervid advocate of religion in general, and of Christianity in particular. Several alleged causes of the fall were considered, but no mention was made of religion. So I took the opportunity when seconding a vote of thanks for the lecture to draw attention to the omission, and to suggest that while there were a number of contributory causes, the most fundamental and powerful one was the amazing mode and body of thought which arose in later Greece, continued in Rome, and was fixed and intensified by the adoption of the latest of the introduced oriental religions, viz., Christianity.

I have in former articles mentioned the descent of Plato into obscurantism (supernatural creation, etc.) and of the Neo-Platonists, including their doctrine that the highest truths cannot be reached by reason, but only by some sort of intuition. It was then but a step to "revelation," and the abyss of Christian superstition; and the disappearance of genuine, natural knowledge completed the great débacle.

We have also to include among the disastrous influences the intense recrudescence of the old superstitious fear, which was evidently a general and powerful source of trouble to early peoples. It was allayed, at least among the more intelligent and informed Greeks and Romans, by Greek science, as is shown by references here and there, as, e.g., in the following lines from the *De Rerum Natura* of the Latin Poet Lucretius:—

"O, glory of the Greeks! who first did chase  
The mind's dread darkness with celestial day . . .  
Thou glad I follow, with firm foot resolved  
To tread the path imprinted by thy steps . . .  
For as the doctrines of thy god-like mind  
Prove into birth how nature first uprose,  
All terrors vanish. . . ."

Plutarch also noted this feature, holding up to contempt people who lived in perpetual dread of having by some trivial action or other offended supernatural or other preternatural powers. These included fear of gods, of devils (legions of them) and of the catastrophes they were supposed to produce, such as eclipses, comets, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, "thunderbolts" and sickness, of magic and enchantment, ghosts, witchery, the evil eye; and so on.

It is true, as our lecturer mentioned in his reply to my contention, that science had declined a good deal before Christianity appeared; but it had by no means died out. The great astronomer Ptolemy lived from 127 to 151 A.D., and Galen, "one of the greatest and most creative biologists of all time" (Singer, *From Magic to Science*) from 130 to 200 A.D.; also Theon and his famous daughter Hypatia (the latter murdered by a Christian mob) taught Astronomy, Mathematics and Philosophy in the fourth and fifth centuries. Roman science was mainly exposi-



tion of that discovered by the Greeks, such as the *Natural History* of Pliny and the *Quæstionum Naturalium* of Seneca. But the insistence by Christian obscurantists on the foolishness of inquiring into nature after the "new revelation" had been made soon resulted in further degradation, viz., the employment of factual statements, some of them wildly imaginary, in order to bolster up Christian dogma.

Under such conditions of gross superstition, fear and ignorance, the almost total absence of education, combined with hatred of classical learning (because, largely or wholly, of the references to the "rival mythology of Greece and Rome"), and hatred by Christians of the Roman civilization in general, we cannot wonder that the people "lost their nerve," and were overcome by "a handful of barbarians."

J. REEVES.

## Correspondence

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."  
WHAT IS "EXPERIENCE"?

SIR,—In your issue of January 20, *Medicus*, reviewing *Primitive Survivals in Modern Thought*, writes: "But on the other hand, if we are to accept the inferences from the very 'experience,' he (Mr. Cohen) is talking about we are driven to suppose, that this same 'experience' is a relatively late arrival in the Universe! More than this, we are driven equally to suppose that it will not be the last existent therein. Were we to reject these two inferences, it could only be by supposing eternal consciousness. What are we to do about it? We cannot stop thinking at will, and we are driven to think about that."

Now, the remark seems an important one, and casting shadow on the conclusiveness of Mr. Cohen's position in conceiving experience as absolutely fundamental. Let us see whether *Medicus* really has said anything relevant.

When we are talking about "experience," we are presupposing that it is always *somebody's* experience, and to talk about experiences that belong to *no-body* would mean nothing as far as intelligible communication of ideas (not mystification or evoking of emotions, mind you!) is concerned. Consequently, when we or the other fellow has "experience" it means then, that we either generally behave in a certain way, from which state of our body certain propositions may be inferred, in which "experience" as similar terms figure, or we are ourselves expressing such statements. These themselves are a specific form of bodily reaction to internal or outward environment. So we can say that, *ultimately*, it is this class of specific reactions of one's body to the internal or external environment and practical or theoretical possibility of them, that is abstractly meant by the common name "experience," again, I must repeat, as far as intelligible communication is concerned.

Keeping this in mind, let us paraphrase *Medicus's* suppositions; substituting for "experience" "specific reactions of one's body, etc." In both statements, we get no mere truisms. It is evident now that we need not reject them nor is there any need of supposing eternal consciousness, i.e., of landing oneself in the absurd phraseology of metaphysics; as *Medicus* contends, an impossible thing for a clear thinker.

I wonder, too, why *Medicus* suddenly changed his terms and did not say "eternal experience." It would have looked rather queer, wouldn't it? Well, that is the point: it is nonsense, notwithstanding the changed garb.

To sum up: When talking about "experience" or "consciousness," we mean *ultimately* "specific physical processes (reactions) of one's body in response to its internal or external environment and a practical or theoretical possibility of them." To "mean" *besides* something more is to mean nothing, to talk nonsense, to stumble in contradictions. Experience is the solid foundation, at least so far as intelligibility of what we are talking about is concerned; it means to say, "if we are to understand a statement, we must know what possible direct experiences are the case if the statement is true (Prof. R. Carnap)."

As to the two different modes of speaking about the same event as "experience" and "an event in the brain inferred from external signs," which theory is gaining ground among psychologists and mathematical logicians, see C. K. Ogden's *A.B.C. of Psychology*. Kegan Paul, 1930, p. 28; see also the keen remarks on p. 132 and 270. See too, *Ersennitnis* Vol. III. p. 107 seq.

Riga, Latvia.

G. S. SMIETERS.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

### LONDON

#### OUTDOOR

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, 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.): 7.30, The Rev. John Boon—"The League of Nations."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7.0, John Katz, B.A.—"Faith in Man and Faith in God."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Gerald Heard—"The Problem of Leisure."

STUDY CIRCLE (63 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, February 4, Mr. P. Goldman—"A Scientific Conception of Matter."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. ("The Laurie Arms," Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, H. Preece—"The Dictatorship of the Proletariat."

### COUNTRY

#### INDOOR

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Boilermakers' Hall, Argyle Street, Birkenhead, opposite Scala Cinema, entrance in Lorn Street): 7.0, A. D. McLaren (London)—"Relics."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Shakespeare Rooms, Edmund Street, Birmingham): 7.30, Mr. C. H. Smith—"An Analysis on B.B.C.'s Talks on 'Way to God.'"

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Cobden Hall, Cort Street, Blackburn): 7.0, Mr. H. Archer, of Burnley will give his postponed Lecture on—"International Finance and Armaments." Study Circle every Thursday at 7.30.

BRADFORD SECULAR SOCIETY (Godwin Commercial Hotel, Godwin Street, Bradford): 7.0, A German Student—"Germany, Religion and Atheism."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. Jack Thompson (Nelson)—"Ductless Glands and their Functions."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, M'Lellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Chapman Cohen—"How Science Explains Religion?" Oddfellows' Hall, Forest Road, Edinburgh, Monday (February 4), Chapman Cohen—"The Case for Freethought." *Freethinker* and other Literature on sale at all meetings.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Milton Hall, 12a Daulby Street, Liverpool, off London Road, by the Majestic Cinema): 7.0, D. Robinson (Liverpool)—"Heaven and Hell."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Clarion Cafe, Market Street, Manchester): 7.30, F. R. Monks (Manchester)—"God Save the King."

MIDDLESBOROUGH (Bizacta Hall, Newton Street): 7.0, Tuesday, February 5, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"Will Jesus Save Mankind?"

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Plymouth Chambers, Drake Circus): 7.0, Mr. Harwood—"The Devil and His Work."

STOCKTON-ON-TEES: 7.0, Sunday, February 3, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N.S.S. (The Labour Hall, Laygate): 7.30, Friday, February 1, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"The Blood and Fire Brigade."

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Green Street): 7.0, Debate—*Affir.*: Mr. E. M. Maccoby. *Neg.*: Mr. B. O'Connell—"Are the Doctrines of the Old Testament Humane?"



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The Memorandum of Association sets forth that the  
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upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this  
world is the proper end of all thought and action. To pro-  
mote freedom of enquiry. To promote universal Secular Edu-  
cation. To promote the complete secularization of the State,  
etc. And to do all such lawful things as are conducive to  
such objects. Also to have, hold, receive, and retain any  
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