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• EDITED *by* CHAPMAN COHEN •

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Views and Opinions

According to Plan

ONE of my readers, noting what I have recently said on evolution, writes:—

I quite agree with what you say concerning the folly of opposing the truth of the theory of evolution. What I am not so certain as you appear to be is that evolution negatives, or at least discounts the belief in pure theism. . . . You do not sufficiently allow for the fact of progress. This fact is quite clear, no matter how or where life began. I do not stress the extent of the gap between the highest animal and the lowest man. That gap will, I believe, be bridged. But it is common ground between the believer in a Divine Mind and those who reject it that the highest type of man has developed from the lowest. It might, indeed, be argued that the gap between the lowest and the highest man is not greater than the gap between man and the animal world.

The progress of man is a fact, look at it as we will. Man moves to greater and greater things. But why? What is the motive power behind this? Why should there be progress at all? Is not the progress, observable throughout nature, on all fours with the manner in which man himself moves, ever seeking something better, and, on the whole achieving it? It seems to me that the significance of this fact of progress is one that you completely overlook.

Now this is quite a good plea, from the standpoint of a Theist, and it is worthy of a serious handling. But I do not plead guilty to having overlooked it. I have dealt with it in both my *Other Side of Death*, and in *Theism and Atheism*.

* * *

Is Progress a Fact?

In the first place I do not agree that progress is a fact in nature, if we mean by that, nature apart from our reading it into our ideas and aspirations, and if we mean, as we ought to mean, by "progress," the advance towards a preconceived and desired goal. But nature, as a whole does not show this advance towards an end. It builds up

and it destroys. An area may be made uninhabitable for man by the multiplication of insects—quite a progressive arrangement from the point of view of the insect, but hardly so from the standpoint of man. Whole peoples have been killed off and civilizations lost by similar means. What real progress can one detect in individual character when one places the modern Athenian or Roman at the side of the ancient citizen of Rome or Athens? Greater knowledge, yes, but in manhood? In what way does nature indicate greater care for the finer type of character than for the coarser one? And what is the final outlook? Even religious scientists assure us that the end of the whole "scheme" of cosmic development is a lifeless earth circling round a dead central sun. What becomes of cosmic progress then? From this point of view it is progress towards extinction—a form of progress which man imitates when he uses his knowledge to invent weapons of destruction that threaten to destroy the questionable civilization that has been developed.

There is not progress in nature, there is only change; that is all evolution presents us with. Evolution, in fact, is change, and scientists, or rather philosophers—for the law of evolution was not formulated so much by the former as by the latter—merely state the "law" of the change. The world is a world of change, and the mere movement of atoms is enough to account for that. It is man in his egoistic anthropomorphism who counts everything as making for progress which gratifies his desires and realizes his ideals. So might a rat count as progressive a filthy drain, and reckon it all to the good that the drain set going an epidemic among the human population.

* * *

God and Man

So far as *mankind, as a whole*, is concerned, it cannot be denied that there has been what is called progress. I emphasize the italicized words because they are vital to a correct understanding of the subject. As a matter of fact, progress is no more a universal fact with the human than it is with the animal world. With many tribes there is no change taking place in their modes of living for thousands of generations, and both tribes and nations disappear from the world as do varieties and species of animals. Progress is not a universal fact in the world of human nature; it is, on the contrary, casual in its existence, and very uncertain in its operations.

But there is one very obvious and very stubborn fact that at once disposes of the religious theory that progress, the development of *men* is part of a "divine plan." For it is not men as a collection of separate individuals, but man as a species that develops. The Theist holds that every man is a separate "soul," and it is upon the development of each individual that his case depends. But progress is hardly an indi-

vidual characteristic at all. Putting on one side the physiological growth that takes place between infancy and maturity, individuals make no progress whatever, or if they do, it is in rare cases, and forms a negligible quantity in the entire sum of progress. The capacity that a man has, he is born with, and its education depends upon the social state to which he belongs. Millions of men and women are born and die intellectually and physically poor; and on the moral side there is the same tale. If we take the volume of genuine individual indignation expressed at the sight of very large numbers of people living below the line of tolerable comfort and decency, with the artificially created enthusiasm over the marriage of the Duke of Kent with an ex-princess, or the fact that King George has reigned twenty-five years, it can hardly be denied that it is not on the score of moral or mental individual development that the "Divine Plan" can be greeted with admiration. Theoretically the "Divine Mind" cares for each individual; in fact, the individual counts for very little in the tale of progress.

* * *

Man and Man

Now I do not want my friendly questioner to jump to the conclusion that I am denying the fact of what we call progress. What I want him, and others, to realize is that progress—that is, movement in the direction of what *we* decide to be good, is achieved by human society, the individual serving as a mouthpiece, or an expression of the fact. In what sense is the man of to-day superior to the ancient Egyptian of six thousand years ago, or to the ancient Hindoo of four thousand years ago, or to the ancient Greek of two thousand years ago? He is not physically stronger, or mentally greater. There is nothing we are capable of to-day that the man of the periods named could not have done, *if he had possessed the knowledge that we have*. Yet the man of to-day—the ordinary man that one meets in a train or tram-car, the man who could not tell you the names of a dozen of the world's greatest men of antiquity, and who knows far more of leading footballers than of leading philosophers, can do things which to the greatest men of even a thousand years ago would have been considered as little short of magical. What is the explanation of the paradox?

I have already given the explanation. It lies in the fact that we praise *man* for the progress *he* has made, when we should be thinking of *men* and of the progress that the race, as a whole, has made. Man has been defined as a tool-using animal, and it is as good a description of him as any. For his conquest of nature is dependent on tools. These tools range from a simple digging-stick up to those refinements of instruments, of language, and of methods that enables modern science to do so much. The formulæ of the mathematician are as much tools as the club and digging-stick of primitive man. They are the tools by which man explores and conquers his environment. Even the institutions that man creates form part of the social tools by which peace and order are maintained. But every tool, from a shovel to the differential calculus, from the canoe made from a hollowed out tree-trunk to the *Queen Mary*, from the tom-tom to a Queen's Hall Orchestra, from the semi-animal vocalizations of primitive man to the language of a Shakespeare, all represent the piled-up achievements of the race. Without the nexus formed by a continuous society this development would be impossible. Without the social environment which takes each newly born individual and moulds him to a roughly uniform pattern, each generation would have to begin where its predecessor began, and would have,

roughly, to stop at where they stopped. In each generation the individual takes what previous generations have given him, and adds a little here and there; society as a whole receives the gift, preserves it, hands it on to the next generation, and so makes possible a continuity which we have in mind when we talk of the progress of the race.

But this accumulated progress is not individual, it is social. Bernard Shaw cannot write better than Aristophanes, he can only talk about it more. The greatest of our present-day scientists has not a better brain than Democritus or Aristotle, he can merely do more because he has inherited a larger capital on which to live. The pigmy is not taller than the giant because he stands on the giant's shoulder; the individual of to-day is not greater than the individual of yesterday because he knows more and can do more, he is merely reaping the benefit of a social heredity that has been accumulating the wealth he enjoys.

* * *

The Egotism of Belief

Now see the way in which these facts knock the bottom out of any argument based on the plea that progress is a fact and that men reap the reward of their experience, as per the "Divine Plan." This would only be true if the men who went through the experience reaped the benefits. But they obviously do not. How many people died before we knew enough to trace their premature deaths to bad drainage? How many suffered excruciating pain before the benefit of anaesthetics was known? How many people suffered that others might reap the benefits of certain customs and institutions? How many millions have been slaughtered, and will be slaughtered, before mankind realizes the futility, the stupidity, and the sheer barbarism of warfare, and the absolutely brutalizing consequences of the military spirit? What is the essence of the old maxim "A burnt child dreads the fire," but the statement that someone had to experience the pain of a burn for others to know that fire could hurt, or that certain things were deadly poisons? The truth is that man is not made better by pain and suffering, but that in the absence of any other method of instruction he must suffer in order to find out what benefits and what injures. But it is not the ones who suffer who reap the benefit of the experience. It is those who are left and who have not passed the experience who reap the benefit. It is because so many have been burned at the fires of life, that we are able to avoid being scorched. The myriads of millions who have suffered are gone, the lesson of their suffering and their experience is ours, and we profit from their pain. Our comparatively high development, is not gained from our experience, but from theirs. If there is a "Divine Mind" behind this process, then we can only conceive it as using myriads of human beings as the Spartans are said to have used their slaves, as object lessons that their own children might benefit. We live on the experience of our predecessors; we profit from their experience, and in that profound egotism that goes with all religion and disguised selfishness, and with Christianity more than any, the believer in a "Divine Plan" says, "It is true that throughout the whole of the animal world species preys on species, and can only exist so long as they do so; it is true that in the human race the same thing continues on a modified scale; it is true that myriads of human beings have suffered for want of the knowledge that we have; it is true that mothers have borne, and still bear in pain, children that science will one day know how to avoid; it is true that every step in civilization that has been gained has been purchased at a terrible cost of human life and happiness; but it is all part of the "Divine Plan,"

for while the race has waded through rivers of blood and over millions of tortured bodies to get where it is, yet is the "Divine Plan" justified? for behold! it has produced *ME*.

I started off with the intention of writing a short article, and look at the result! But people should not write such provocative letters.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Shakespeare's Secularism

"Others abide our question—thou art free."

Matthew Arnold on Shakespeare.

"Truth can never be confirmed enough,

Though doubt did ever sleep."—*Shakespeare.*

THE world has long agreed to regard William Shakespeare as the greatest of all writers, as the chief exponent of the oldest of the arts. So pre-eminent is he, that he is head and shoulders above even old Homer and divine Dante. He is also, what is unusual in a classical writer, a perennial best-seller. Although in his lifetime he never made more than a few hundreds of pounds yearly, his works continue to sell in ever-increasing numbers. If he could be paid all the royalties his works have earned he would be by far the richest man in all the world. Shakespeare's writings prove him to have been among the sanest of men, yet cranks of all kinds have wished to claim the greatest Englishman as one of themselves, and from time to time have published volumes of special pleading, which would have brought blushes to the hardened face of an old-time Old Bailey advocate. Lengthy disquisitions, as numerous as "quills upon the fretful porcupine," have been published to demonstrate that Shakespeare was a Roman Catholic, a Puritan, a Spiritualist, an Evangelical Christian, and other things beyond count. A number of fanatics dispute Shakespeare's claim to his own books. Other surprising people allege that the Christian Trinity inspired his plays and poems. Indeed, Shakespearean commentators are adepts at bringing startling meanings out of the master's text, as a conjurer brings eggs, birds, and rabbits from a hat. Think, for a moment, of the hundreds of clergymen, of all sects and opinions, who have claimed Shakespeare as being in sympathy with their own petty particular views.

It is well therefore, to examine the facts of the case, which have been partially obscured by so much verbiage. The religious opinions of Shakespeare can be ascertained by careful search. Mary Arden, the poet's mother, came of a Roman Catholic family. The probability is that she herself was a Catholic, but there is no evidence either way. Shakespeare's father is not so doubtful. He was a member of the Stratford-on-Avon Corporation during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and must have conformed to the Protestant religion. The result seems that young Shakespeare was brought up under a probably Catholic mother, and a father who was, at least, a professing Protestant.

Shakespeare's own writings, however, show his revolt from the Roman Catholic Church. He was so ignorant of Catholic ritual that he makes Juliet ask the friar if she shall come "at evening mass." No Catholic could have made this mistake. "King John" is, obviously, not the work of a Romanist. The purport of "Love's Labour Lost" is to show the uselessness of vows. The Duke, in "Measure for Measure," playing the part of a friar preparing a criminal for death, gives Claudio consolation. Not a word of Christian doctrine, not a syllable of sacrificial salvation and sacramental forgiveness is introduced. This omission is most significant. Moreover,

Shakespeare's poems and plays are full of eloquent passages directed against the celibate ideals of the Roman Church. In a wonderful line in "A Midsummer Night's Dream," he pictures the forsaken sisterhood of the cloister:—

"Chanting faint hymns to the cold, fruitless moon."

Elsewhere, in a more Rabelaisian mood, he refers to something being as fit "as the nun's lips to the friar's mouth," and many other equally significant passages might be quoted. In addition, the fatal objection to Shakespeare's own Catholicism is that neither Queen Elizabeth nor King James could have publicly favoured Shakespeare if he were a Romanist. Nor could the Pembroke have given him their patronage.

Yet it can be proved equally that Shakespeare was no Puritan, no conventional Reformation Protestant. His view of life is never narrow, ascetic, nor religious. Throughout he seems to say, with Sir Toby Belch:—

"Dost thou think because thou art virtuous,
There shall be no more cakes and ale?"

Furthermore, he puts quite a lot of profanity into his plays, including some appreciable thrusts at the Christian religion. Think of the clown ridiculing a woman who is lamenting the death of her brother, whom she believes to have gone to a better and brighter world. "The more fool you, madonna," he says, "to mourn for your brother being in heaven." Or burly old Jack Falstaff protesting that he would never be sent to hell, for his fat would set the place alight. William Gifford, an excellent critic, actually called Shakespeare, "the Coryphaeus of profanity." There is plenty of foundation for this criticism, for whenever Shakespeare touches the riddle of existence he writes like that old Freethinker, Montaigne. His two greatest tragedies, "Hamlet" and "King Lear," are non-Christian in their implication. In "Hamlet" we do not know "in that sleep of death what dreams may come." The dying words of Hamlet are "The rest is silence." The clergy are mocked by the description of man, not as a fallen angel, but as "this quintessence of dust," and "this paragon of animals." In "King Lear," that tragedy "too deep for tears," is heard the cry from the heart:—

"As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods;
They kill us for their sport."

In no sense of the word was Shakespeare a bigot. With equal ease and equal interest he portrays Prince Hamlet's philosophizing, Cardinal Wolsey's piety, and Jack Falstaff's blasphemies. In his great tragedies he deals with the deepest issues of life and conduct, but he does not point to the Cross of Christ as a solution of the riddle of existence. In an age of fanatical faith, at a time when fierce religious wars and schisms were convulsing the Old World, and when in England the Protestant-Reformed religion was engaged in a life-and-death struggle with the older Romish faith, it is truly remarkable that Shakespeare turned his back on Christianity. Not, observe, from hostility, for he was too free from prejudice for that. It was from the profound knowledge that, as a philosophy of life, it threw no useful light over the deep abysses of human thought, and over the awful tides of human circumstances. On these momentous questions his own views were individual and Secularistic. His own circle of friends knew Shakespeare himself to be irreligious, and the proof is that the epitaph on Mrs. Susannah Hall, Shakespeare's eldest daughter, clearly implied that his own life had not been one of piety:—

"Witty above her sex, but that's not all,
Wise to salvation was good Mistris Hall:
Something of Shakespeare was in that, but this
Wholly of Him with whom she's now in bliss."

It is the introduction of this modern, secularistic

note in Shakespeare's writings that helps to make his works as readable in the twentieth century as in "the spacious days" of Elizabethan England. That is why, three centuries after his death, when Christian Orthodoxy is in the melting-pot, men turn to his pages for guidance on those momentous questions which knock at every thoughtful man's heart. The lustre of his fame must deepen with the progress of the years.

"What good is like to this—
To do worthy the writing, and to write
Worthy the reading and the world's delight."

MIMNERMUS.

The Early Opening of the Eastern Hemisphere

THE Arabian civilization which so long adorned the annals of the Iberian Peninsula came to a close in 1492, when Granada surrendered to the arms of the Catholic Spaniards. The neighbouring Portuguese kingdom had expelled the Moors some two centuries earlier, but its independence was now menaced by the ambitions of Castile. But Joas of Portugal overcame the Castilians in the conflict at Aljubarrota, and the maritime expeditions attributed to his son Henry greatly increased European knowledge of the globe. Indeed, the sea voyages then projected ultimately led to the Western subjugation of the vast and varied continent of India.

The eulogists of Prince Henry, the so-called Navigator, who never appears to have travelled beyond the Northern Coast of Africa, picture him as a model of lofty virtue who was inspired by a desire to extend geographical knowledge on purely scientific principles. He is said to have erected on the rocky promontory of Sagres, a college and an observatory in which the arts of seamanship were taught. Cartographers, astronomers and trained navigators were here assembled, and vessels specially designed for long voyages were constructed. The rude nautical instruments then in use were improved, and every ship was provided with a compass. With the aid of Jacine, an expert instrument and map-maker, Prince Henry decided to attempt a sea voyage to the Far East along the Western Coast of Africa.

This noble picture of Prince Henry as one of the world's wonders in maritime achievement may be viewed in Major's *Prince Henry the Navigator*, as well as in Beazeley's work with the same title. Also, it still appears in standard works of reference. But it is dismissed as completely illusory by that eminent authority on the period, E. J. Payne, in his powerful essay on *The Age of Discovery in the Cambridge Modern History*.

The Spaniards and Portuguese had long purchased their black slaves from the Moors, but it was thought that by coasting Africa they could capture them for themselves, and this appears as a leading motive of their voyages of discovery. Still, Henry was not a slave dealer exclusively. "The capture of slaves," notes Payne, "was destined to subserve a greater purpose, the conversion of Bilad Ghana (now known as Guinea) into a Christian dependency of Portugal to be administered by the military Order of Jesus Christ. In Portugal this Order had succeeded to the property and functions of the Temple, and Dom Henrique was its Governor."

Payne regards Henry's scheme as the last endeavour of the crusading spirit, and he designates as the last crusade, the ruthless warfare with the Moslems in the

Far Eastern ocean which ended nearly half a century after Henry's death. There can be little question that piety and pelf were combined in these undertakings. Payne remarks that: "Chroniclers dwell complacently on the joy experienced by the Infante (Prince Henry), commensurate not to the value of the slaves actually taken, but to the hope of future captures, and on his pious rapture at the prospect of saving the souls of so many African heathen. Dom Henrique now sought and obtained from the Pope a special indulgence for all who should fight under the banner of the Order of Christ for the destruction and confusion of the Moors and other enemies of Christ."

The form and extension of the African land mass towards the south was conjectural in antiquity, but Eratosthenes and other thinkers were convinced that the coast of Africa presented a semicircular curve just below the Red Sea, and proceeded upwards along the north western shore as far as Morocco. As there was no Suez Canal in those days, a voyage along these strands would prove more expeditious than the customary journey through the Mediterranean and Red Seas, with its delaying disembarkation at the Suez isthmus.

Norse and Genoese navigators had already made known Africa's north-western coasts, and now successive voyagers were dispatched, each penetrating more and more southwards. For, in that superstitious age, even experienced sea-farers needed assurance that sea monsters and other marine enemies were not eagerly awaiting their imprudent prey.

Zarco, one of Henry's officers, discovered Madeira in 1420, and there the vine was planted, and its vintages are still its leading product. Other islands were visited and the coast-line noted. Native races hitherto unknown were met with, and at least 1,000 were landed in Portugal, where they served as pages and menials in aristocratic households.

The mouth of the Gambia was reached in 1455, where, for the first time on record, European sailors watched the disappearance of the Pole Star, and beheld with wonder the splendours of the Southern Cross. Henry died in 1460 and, in that year, Gomez landed on the Cape Verde Islands. The Portuguese persevered in their expeditions, and in 1470 Fernando de Poo discovered the island which still bears his name, while d'Isco-bar crossed the equator. Wherever they landed the Portuguese erected crosses, while later they set up pillars surmounted with a cross and carved with their sovereign's arms and name. The conversion of the natives and Portuguese annexation of their property were thus happily combined.

Another expedition, conducted by Bartholomew Diaz, rounded the Cape, and high hopes were entertained for a successful sea voyage to India itself. The tempestuous weather Diaz experienced at the Cape induced him to term it Cabo Tormentoso—the Cape of Storms. But in the light of Diaz's promising achievement, the King of Portugal chose the appellation, the Cape of Good Hope.

While the Portuguese were attempting to reach India by an eastern route, Columbus was striving to persuade their King to aid him in a voyage of Indian discovery across the Atlantic, but without success. Even after this intrepid navigator had reached what he believed to be the Western shores of India, as the name West Indies still testifies, by sailing the Atlantic, the Portuguese continued their eastern expeditions. In 1496, the earlier eastern voyages were resumed, and Vasco da Gama set out with three ships in search of the islands of spices, pearls and gold. Adverse winds delayed his voyage at the Cape, but at last he was permitted to proceed along Africa's eastern shores, and sailors landed to ascertain the where-

abouts of the dominions of Prester John. But the various ports of call were in possession of fierce Moslems, who obstructed them in every way, until Melinda was sighted, where provisions were obtained, and the priceless services of an Indian pilot secured. The adventures reached Calicut, and here again they received a cold welcome, as the Moslem merchants viewed the strangers as potential rivals or even as pirates. Ultimately, however, da Gama so greatly impressed the Zamorin of Calicut with the power and affluence of his royal master, that he consented to consider the proposal of an alliance with Portugal.

This auspicious voyage alarmed Venice as well as the Egyptian Sultan, whose monopoly of the Oriental trade became insecure. Venetian merchants predicted their impending ruin, and as the Sultan derived his main revenue from duties imposed on all commodities entering Egypt, with additional charges made on all merchandise exported to other lands, the rival States, whose relations had long been unfriendly, decided to combine in face of the common danger. With Venetian aid, the Egyptians built a small fleet, which was intended to sink the Portuguese ships when they again sailed to the Eastern seas.

Nevertheless, the Portuguese planned a still more extensive undertaking, and in 1500, thirteen vessels commanded by Cabral, with an armament of 1,200 men and several Franciscan Priars to instruct the native races with the beauties and advantages of the true religion, set their faces towards the sea. Vasco da Gama had taken a more westerly course than his predecessors, and Cabral steered so far west that he touched Brazil, which he annexed as a Portuguese possession, and planted a cross near the landing stage, which is said to be preserved in that country to this very day. Cabral returned with much plunder, but as he had lost several vessels and crews, his voyage was viewed as a failure. So Vasco da Gama was dispatched with a powerful fleet and, having overthrown the ruler of Calicut, he came back, with a great cargo of booty. Many minor adventures were made and the islands of St. Helena, Madagascar, Ascension, the Seychelles and others added to the world's map.

The Venetian scheme of colonization was adopted, and a Portuguese governor was appointed for each colony to encourage commerce and collect tribute, while a Viceroy superintended trading matters and the cinnamon industry of Ceylon became a monopoly.

Goa was established as a Portuguese province, and the Port of Ormuz, a leading centre of Eastern commerce, was annexed. But their supreme triumph was the capture of the Moluccas—the world-famous Spice Islands—which the Portuguese discovered in 1511. By 1521 they had secured complete control over these coveted Islands, and the condiments so indispensable to health in insanitary Europe became a Portuguese monopoly, and prices soared in all Western markets. Discord in Egypt, again, at this time deranged the old trade route through Alexandria, and served to promote Portuguese trade. China and Japan now entered the sphere of Western influence, and for the moment Portugal held the exclusive possession of the Eastern trade upon which the Occident depended for the luxuries of life.

As the years rolled on, and Columbus' voyages initiated the discovery that a vast continent existed in the West, the Pope was petitioned to apportion the American territories to which Spain and Portugal were respectively entitled. So, that notorious Pontiff, Alexander VI., conferred all Western regions upon Spain, while those in the East were granted to Portugal. But the latter naturally demurred to this partitioning plan, as it excluded them from every

American realm, so the line of demarcation was extended 270 leagues westwards. The rival powers, however, squabbled incessantly concerning their respective rights to newly discovered territories, especially the greatly valued Spice Islands, until, in 1529, the Emperor Charles V. ceded to Portugal Spain's alleged rights to the Moluccas in return for the payment by the Portuguese of 350,000 gold ducats.

Throughout the sixteenth century the Indian Ocean remained in Portugal's hands. But in 1580 Spain and Portugal were united under Philip II., and, when Portugal's independence was restored in 1640, other competitors successfully disputed Iberian supremacy in the Eastern world.

T. F. PALMER.

Jesus and the B.B.C.

IN the January 6 number of the *Freethinker*, Mr. Cohen whimsically assumes that if the "Jesus of the Gospels" should be allowed to broadcast uncensored over the B.B.C., he would take issue with his alleged followers over their more or less liberal interpretations of his message. As a piece of satirical writing directed against those who uphold the gospels as unerring records his position is sound and logical.

And it could be carried much farther. Indeed, quoting from the sixteenth chapter of Mark, it might well be proven that all of them are damned for failing to check up with the infallible "signs" of belief, as based on power to cast out devils, speak with tongues, heal the sick, handle serpents, and drink deadly poisons.

Again, it might be claimed that none of Christ's modern disciples had ever raised the dead, removed mountains, or done any of the "greater things" which Jesus promised his disciples they would be able to do. It hardly seems as if these "greater things" are comprised in any of the present doings of the clergy, even granting the miracle of transubstantiation and their claims to save men's souls (figuratively?) by the "blood of the Lamb."

There are certainly a hundred ways in which the followers of the "Gospel Jesus" can (and should) be "razed" from some such angle; and yet I am inclined to take issue with our able editor, first as to the effectiveness of his argument when directed against the better informed elements in the Church; and second, because of what I am able to make out of the record, faulty as it is, by a method which to me is rationally sound, psychologic—generally consistent with the principles of historic criticism.

As already suggested, I have no fault to find with satire directed against the fanatical Bible worshipper. "Answer a fool according to his folly," and a Bible worshipper by more Bible; but it seems to me that this method loses force just in the proportion that our opponents profess the acceptance of the modern critical attitude toward the scriptures.

To such extent they have started upon a course of Freethought, and should be congratulated and encouraged. My issue with persons of this class is, that they are not honest enough (as yet) to admit their relations. I would insist that the moment they assume to think for themselves in the slightest degree, as opposed to "authority," they are becoming Freethinkers.

Then why not urge them to think things through? If they can justify themselves in a Freethought course as to the nature of the Gospels, will this not lead inevitably to a much freer and more natural interpretation of the very personality and message of Jesus?

This brings me to my second point (which so far as

raising a personal issue with Mr. Cohen is concerned is more apparent than real), in that our editor deliberately chooses to discuss the Jesus of the Gospels *taken literally*, while I choose to reconstruct, as best I may from these same records, a probable figure who could have existed and formed the basis of the Christian myth. This also furnishes me the long-awaited opportunity of discussing a point raised by him in an editorial June 10, entitled "Another Life of Christ," dealing with my book, *The Making of a Messiah*.

The question is often raised by Freethinkers: "Why bring in Jesus at all?" My answer is first: because he already occupies the stage set before all Christendom for good or ill, and, second: because a soundly psychological analysis of his story should be able to turn out a better figure than the mawkish, sentimental individual so frequently exhibited even in the most modernistic pulpits.

As I clear my mind from the rubbish of myth, miracle and traditional theology, I feel more and more certain that this individual behind the myth, the actual historical Jesus, said some things which would do his followers a world of good; but whether they could be repeated over the B.B.C., or would only find welcome space in the columns of the *Freethinker*, I leave the reader to judge.

Remember, I do not assume for a moment that I am proving the historicity of Jesus. In the last analysis I have only the gospel Jesus to work from; but some things quoted of him in these records are so good, that in order to believe that they come from the man Jesus I am forced to disbelieve many of the other quotations—which are not so good—as coming from a different source.

My point is, that if he said the one thing he couldn't have said the other, any more than Chapman Cohen could honestly voice the Apostles' Creed. For instance, Jesus is quoted as saying in effect to the woman of Samaria, "The time is coming soon when those who worship God will no longer worship him on your mountain or in our Temple in Jerusalem, but will worship him in spirit and in truth." Quite advanced for his time, was it not? Sounds almost like the voice of a Freethinker. And if he gave expression to such thoughts then, where would we find him to-day? I doubt if he would be found with those who button their collars behind. Neither would he say, "He that believeth on me shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned."

Again, "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins." Did he say that? "This is my blood shed for the remission of sins." I very much suspect that even this was put into his mouth by later gospel writers, who could never grasp his simple doctrine about forgiveness (or elaborate it so effectually into a ritual). If you forgive others God will forgive you all right, all right! Therefore settle your grudges before you bring your gifts to the altar.

Common sense never seems to appeal to the priestly class. In the characterization of Jesus, "they compass heaven and earth to secure one proselyte, only to make him more a child of hell than themselves." Surely one does not hear this over the radio. Sounds like a "blatant Atheist"—almost.

One more example comes down to us among many that could be mentioned to prove the Jesus of the Gospels much more a Freethinker than, let us say, the Christ of Christianity. The Parable of the Good Samaritan! One has to know Palestine in the time of Jesus to appreciate what a sockdolager he was giving the established orthodoxy of his day. The wild young scamp, the hated heretical Samaritan, the pious Levite priest, the roadside inn! Fill in the

features of this story from the modern world, and try it over the B.B.C. It may get by.

And so my method of approach, which I feel is a reasonably sane one, appears to yield certain evidences that the Jesus of the Gospels, if he lived at all, was a man of rather up-to-date notions, and if living to-day would doubtless be excluded from the sacred presence and denied many of the pious privileges of his professed followers.

I like to tell the priests what kind of person I think Jesus was, as judged by his outstanding words and deeds, and if he was that kind of person—one who acts and speaks as he did on occasion—then I feel sure he couldn't have been one to uphold much of the blithering nonsense that has been taught in his name.

W. W. HARVEY, M.D.

Boston, Mass., U.S.A.

Mr. Simmons' New Book

READERS of Mr. Bayard Simmons' occasional contributions to this journal, and especially those who have read his recent book of poems, *Minerva's Owl*, will find a new store of delight in his latest volume, *The Pagoda of Untroubled Ease*.

I have spent two pleasant and fruitful hours on this collection, and I must go back again to the more striking—*Proem, Silent Friends, Madre de Dios and Quien Sabe*. His flexible verse is as various as his themes, and as these move "from grave to gay, from lively to severe," so does his verse move in pliant response. He uses for the sonnet chiefly the Shakespearean modification: but he also employs successfully the more difficult Petrarchan form beloved of Milton and Wordsworth; and on occasion he invents new forms—at least new to me, and with Meredith he does not hesitate to use a 16-line sonnet. His thought ranges freely over Life, Love, Death and Nature; and his philosophy seems to be one of "quietism" in middle age, after a youth of "gather ye rosebuds while ye may." He gives us two beautiful elegies—one on his brother—and a touching "In Memoriam" to Edith M. Vance. He hates war, which has robbed so many millions of their youth, and he trounces cant wherever he finds it.

"When poets shall no longer write,
When publishers are shot at sight,

Then shall this fond heart cease you to adore,
But as these things don't happen, why say more?"

"There was a time when fiddlers stood
For all that is not good:
But now the Puritanic moan
To hear a saxophone:
I wonder will the Righteous carp
At Heaven's golden harp."

And how is this for a smack all round:—

"Since Baal and Moloch have been overthrown
You say, Jehovah comes into his own;
But, pardon me, I think that only gammon,
The real ruler of this world is Mammon."

Mr. Simmons evidently loves his Shakespeare: and he has read Ingersoll to some purpose. In his *Lecture on Shakespeare*, Ingersoll among many pregnant sentences says, "Shakespeare's mind was an ocean whose waves touched all the shores of thought": and in another place, "In 1564 Calvin died, and Shakespeare was born, what a glorious exchange for humanity." Now see how a poet like Mr. Simmons can add to these two ideas while compressing them within the four corners of a quatrain.

1564

"Shakespeare, whose master mind all thought could range,
Was born in the same year that Calvin died.
For this sour preacher of the Crucified
Mankind received a glorious exchange."

That "sour preacher" is a touch of genius. If readers of this paper desire some hours of pleasure and untroubled ease let them try Mr. Simmons' pagoda—(Matthews and Marrot, Ltd., 3s. 6d.).

MATHEMATICUS.

Acid Drops

Mr. Isaac Foot, M.P., is a supporter of the Government's India Bill, but that does not blind him to the fact that there is something better than this for India. He gave this discovery to the world at the Bristol Methodist Conference. He said: "The solution for India is in the New Testament." "Our first true knowledge of liberty is from the New Testament." We expect we know what Mr. Foot has in mind—apart from votes and the hope of promotion, and we think that it is likely that Mr. Foot will move that something like this be inserted into the preamble of the Bill:—

Inasmuch as we are told that it is our duty to turn one cheek when the other is smitten, to take no thought for the morrow, to render obedience to the powers that be, for they are ordained of God, and that whoever resists the godly deserves damnation, that there is more glory in submitting to injustice than in resisting it, be it therefore enacted, etc., etc.

And, after all, as Mr. Foot might have pointed out to his audience, we have taken Christianity to India, and it is *puerile*, in the face of that, to grumble at any little material hardships from which the Indian peoples may suffer.

There is a very easy way to publicity, and fame, in this country. It is not politics because even there one has some regard to common sense, and one has to get a position in the political world before inanities and stupidities assume news value. It is not to be achieved by writing piffle, because one has to have friends on the press to get the advertisement inserted under the head of "Literary Gossip." It is not commerce, because here one has to make money, before the Christian conscience will accept that as a sign of superlative ability. The finest way to fame is for a parson to let it be known that he has mentally outgrown the Mother Hubbard stage by announcing that he does not believe in the story of the Garden of Eden, or in the Virgin Birth; or better still, for a scientist of very ordinary accomplishments to announce that the science of the Bible is right and the conclusion of modern scientists quite wrong.

The newspaper publicity gained by Sir Ambrose Fleming is a good illustration of this. A useful worker in the field of applied electricity, not one man in ten thousand would either have known his name or have paid much attention to it if they had come across it. But he has only to announce that he believes in the Bible story of creation, and does not believe in evolution, and he becomes a "famous scientist," which he never was and is not, and scores of papers find him good copy. The most stupid of Christian sects acclaim him, and his name is more familiar to the man in the street than that of the discoverer of X-Rays. Even Australian and Colonial find it useful to print the declaration of this famous scientist, who only succeeds in making the name of science ridiculous. And it is not all to the good that men like Sir Arthur Keith and Professor Eliot Smith should have treated his utterances with the gravity they have done. But when nature gave Sir Ambrose Fleming the mentality he has, it provided a very certain road to notoriety in the Christian world.

Figures about the wonderful benefits of spiritual healing in Brighton seem a bit mixed up. The *Daily Mail* reports "80 per cent improvements," and this is got by declaring that "25 per cent reported no improvement," 75 per cent "spiritually better and happier," and 60 per cent "definite physical improvement." Juggling a little later with the figures give 68 per cent "definite physical improvement" again, 12 per cent "happier," and 20 per cent "no benefit." 12 per cent seems very small fry for "Our Lord" to make "happier," while of the 60 or 68 per cent, one would like to know how many incurable diseases were definitely cured, or in the process of being cured. Is there a single case of blindness, cancer, diabetes, Bright's disease, tuberculosis or other fatal ailments in the list? And have any of the "im-

proved" cases stopped medicine and the doctor, and relied entirely on prayer? Incidentally would the Rev. Mr. Maillard come in for severe punishment if any of his "patients" died? Or would he be let off with a good talking-to like members of the Peculiar People?

Because some farmer's boy scribbled some nonsense on the shell of one of his master's eggs before or while packing them, a Sunday paper pretends to see herein a Divine Message. It reports that owing apparently to the "egg" arriving at one of our many lunatic asylums, "many visitors have knelt and prayed in the presence of the egg." While we smile at the "presence of the egg," we cannot see that it is any more foolish to imagine the bumpkin's "message" as less authoritative than the Holy Bible, nor why a Farmer is less qualified to write "Gospels" than a Fisherman, a Publican or a Carpenter. We expect, in due course, to hear of numerous "Commentaries" explaining a thousand ways what the Egg "really" means.

The *News of the World* seems agitated because "An Imposter in Blackcloth" (journalise for a clergyman) took a fee of five shillings from a victim whom he "healed." Of course it is a very small fee for a man in clerical dress to charge, but, as Mr. Bottomley said about the office-boy who stole stamps, one must begin somewhere.

The "Groupers" get a whole column to themselves in the *Methodist Recorder*, which reports a meeting at Brighton. One speaker said, "The world will be changed when you are prepared to make fools of yourselves as perhaps you think I am doing now." Perhaps he is right, but are he and his fellow fools "changing" things *for the better*? Testimony was given by a lady at the same meeting, who said that God had performed a miracle in bringing her "to love a certain person whom she had never before been able to tolerate." The "miracle" is not specified. It leaves us wondering whether God gave him a handsomer face or a bigger banking account.

The *Church Times* does not like "Liberal" Catholics or "Modernists." "Their deity," it says, "appears to us to be not the Creator and Saviour but a mere projection of the academic consciousness of Agnostic professors. Their Bible is an encyclopedia of savage myth and vulgar superstition, leavened with a sprinkling of Victorian morality. Their Church represents a voluntary association of intellectual prigs." It is all very true. Any other Christianity than the real genuine kind as represented by the early Fathers, the Roman Catholics, and the Salvation Army, must be abhorrent to the soul of a real, pious believer. We hope our orthodox contemporary will never cease its fight against modernist dilutions or explanations. Superstition, whole and unrelieved, is what is worth fighting for.

Another book on "The Mystery of God" has just been written by Prof. Brasnett, entitled *God the Worshipful*. Like most of the others, this book "not merely illuminates the idea of God, but also fills out the reader's understanding of the mysteries of the Universe. The solutions reached are patently Christian solutions." What wonderful originality! Moreover the pious writer shows how "God must be Living, Powerful and Mysterious," and he must also have "Goodness, Rationality, and Holiness." This looks suspiciously to us as if God were like a Roman Catholic Cardinal—though it is only fair to add that Prof. Brasnett insists on God's delightful "humour," with its "enlightening conclusion that God never laughs *at*, but always *with* his children." In addition, there is the little matter of the Incarnation which really did take place—you have the worthy Professor's word for it. To sum up, there can be no possible doubt whatever that now we all know something more about God. Bravo, Professor Brasnett!

A sidelight on the power of wireless broadcasts comes from America, that great "land of the free." Every Sunday afternoon, Father Coughlin preaches to about 500,000 people. When the American Senate discussed whether the United States should enter a World Court, it was denounced by the Rev. Father and 45,000 telegrams were sent to Washington insisting on the U.S.A. to keep out. The Senators gave in and America is not to enter any World Court. Query: Would a Roman priest sway the English public in the same way or are Americans so very fundamentalist?

The influx of Jews into some parishes has seriously upset many vicars; for their own congregations, according to Dr. Paul P. Levertoff, immediately melt away. So this converted Jew has established a "training centre" to deal with the 1900-year-old problem of bringing Jews to Christ. He has even instituted a "Hebrew Mass," which perhaps means that changing a wafer into Jesus is there done by incanting the usual tomfoolery in Hebrew instead of in Latin. The result, of course, is exactly the same. All that is now wanted to make the Training Centre a success is a few more students—and those who can pay for tuition will be more than welcome. But the cream of the joke is that Dr. Levertoff actually imagines he can train people to convert Jews! Some optimism!

Another terrible crisis looks like wrecking the Church—that is, if a Divine Institution can be wrecked. It is all through the habit of so many extra-pious believers tacking on an "Amen" to every type of prayer, sermon, hymn or blessing they happen to be reciting at the moment utterly regardless of its relevance or suitability. We sympathize with the opposition, and cannot understand why the name of an Egyptian god should be tacked on to anything Christian. Besides the way it is generally intoned or out-toned, is even worse than the average curate's way of getting his religious message over. All the same we ask with genuine sincerity, what would a Christian prayer sound like without a long drawn-out Amen? Would it even be *religious*?

Dr. Martin Shaw, the Director of Church Music in Chelmsford, thinks doleful old hymns must go. Too many of them deal with death and other depressing themes of the same kind; and he gives as a perfect example of the hymn he detests, "Weary of earth and laden with my sin, I look to Heaven and long to enter in." But is not this beautiful example of sense and melody exactly the sort of hymn Christianity has thrived on? Take away gloom and fear and death and hell from genuine Christianity and pray, what is there left?

Mr. H. C. Pearey, a lay member of the Southwark Diocesan Conference, wrote, a little while back, a doleful letter to the religious press, asking, "Will anything ever be done by any of the societies connected with our communion to counteract the pernicious effort of the grossly misleading and mischievous pamphlets issued by the Roman Catholic propagandist societies in this country?" Well, one way would be to get some of the leading writers in the Church of England to deal with the "misleading" statements in brightly written pamphlets and flood the country with them. Another way would be to order 100,000 copies of *Rome or Reason*, by Colonel Robert Ingersoll, as a first batch, and do the same, following up with as many more thousands as possible to carry the war into the enemy's camp. *Rome or Reason* is one of the deadliest attacks ever written against Roman Catholicism, and as it is also a calm and reasoned reply to a great Cardinal—Manning—Mr. H. C. Pearey ought to be delighted to have the opportunity he wants. Or will he?

The Rev. W. B. Selbie enlightens the *Christian World* on the subject of "Sermon Slavery." To him, natur-

ally a sermon is "a living message from God that is a fire in his bones," and therefore, "it is difficult to understand the mentality of those ministers who confess themselves hard-up for subjects on which to preach." He admits "there is no doubt, a kind of sermon which is an offence to God and man." While we cannot imagine a sermon which could be an offence to the sort of god usually preached about, we know perfectly well what Dr. Selbie means about sermons offensive to mankind. Possibly the ministers Dr. Selbie attacks are merely more sensitive than he. Some people would consult a medical man instead of preaching sermons if they felt they were afflicted by the distressing malady Dr. Selbie boasts about (which however, is doubtless only a "Maladie Imaginaire"), namely "a fire in his bones."

In Bishop Welldon's recent autobiography, he ridicules the alleged "Catholic" position of the Church of England, which "stands midway between the Church of Rome, which declines to recognize *her* orders, and the non-Episcopalian Churches, whose orders she herself declines to recognize." Dr. Welldon thinks also that Christianity is undergoing a change. He is optimistic enough to imagine the time is coming when "Instead of saying 'You must believe,' the Church will say, 'I wish to be your friend: let me help you.'" The Church's invitation to "Come inside" always reminds us of the Cannibal getting ready for dinner.

The Rev. Harry Buckley, a Missionary just home from Dahomey gives an interesting and not too sanctimonious account of his experiences in a primitive part of French West Africa. Mr. Buckley talks far more about civilizing than Christianizing the natives, although he probably takes for granted that he was doing both. We cannot blame him for advising the King of Dahomey in terms of profitable industrialism, to substitute oil-production for slave-trading. We were greatly impressed by his narrative of Fetish Rites:—

"Fetichism is very strong and has wide ramifications," he explained. "They even have fetish convents for instructing boys and girls in the secret rites. There are fetish societies all over the country, and each society has its own secret language. Their gatherings are weird and often awe-inspiring. The members dance in large circles to the noise of the native drums until intoxicated by the fierce throbbing of the drums and the excitement of the dance, they fall into a frenzy, hypnotized by sound and mob-suggestion until they believe themselves possessed by the fetish.

Mr. Buckley must have fancied himself at an ordinary revival service, except that the Holy Ghost is the term usually used instead of "The Fetish."

Free Churchmen have fallen in with the suggestion made by a clergyman in the *Western Mail*, that Welsh Nonconformists "should join with members of the Church of Wales, in making pilgrimage to St. David's Cathedral, with the object of raising funds to save the famous oak ceiling." We are sure that if church and chapel-goers put their heads together they will get enough material for this pious purpose.

On Sunday, August 6, Leicester is to be honoured indeed. The Second World Convention of Churches of Christ (Disciples) will be held in that centre of sin. Worst of all, "there will be a celebration of the Holy Communion, when it is expected that there will be over four thousand communicants" ("Communicants, not Communists, Mr. Printer). We once saw the "bread and wine" distributed at one of these alleged "Love Feasts," and the microscopical portions of each provided for the individual communicant convinced us that Feeding the Four Thousand must have been simplicity itself. It was Mark Twain, if we remember aright, who said that the report was untrue. It was easy enough to feed thousands on a couple of loaves, everything would depend upon the size of the loaves, and modern conditions make us familiar with such "miracles." The real story must have been that four people had to eat four thousand loaves each—quite another and more difficult thing.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL

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

Telephone No. : CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- B. HECKFORD (Sydney).—See "Acid Drops." It is possible to take a man like Sir Ambrose Fleming too seriously. Gravity appeals most to men of limited intelligence. Wit is more at home in better company.
- S. CHARLTON.—In saying that life would be empty to you were it not for your faith in Christ you are merely mistaking a confession of despair for an intellectual conviction. We do not wonder that Edgar Saltus placed Jesus Christ among the pessimists.
- FOR Distributing the *Freethinker*.—Don Fisher, 38.
- R. GERRARD.—Thanks for addresses. Paper being sent for six weeks.
- W. DAVISON.—We are sending you pamphlet that will give you the information you require.
- T. MOSLEY.—Thanks, the report will be very useful.
- S. MARTIN.—We have no objection to publishing such a criticism on the subject you name, but it must be a criticism that shows an understanding of the subject.
- R. BRITTON.—Will try and find a corner. We remember Mr. Morrish, and should be pleased to see some Freethought work done in Bristol. Why not make an effort this autumn.
- J. MEERLOO.—Glad you liked the picture of the Dinner. Perhaps, when anything interesting occurs, we may publish a portrait of the editor. We must get level with some of our readers who have displeased us.
- Lecture notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4 by the first post on Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.
- The "*Freethinker*" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to this office.
- The offices of the National Secular Society and the Secular Society Limited, are now at 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Telephone: Central 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.
- Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and not to the Editor.
- The "*Freethinker*" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—
One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.
One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.
All Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to "The Pioneer Press," and crossed "Midland Bank, Ltd., Clerkenwell Branch."

Sugar Plums

To-day (March 10) Mr. Cohen will speak in the Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester. The chair will be taken at 6.30.

The Manchester Branch will conclude the Winter Session on Sunday, March 17, when Mr. Chapman Cohen will speak on "How Science Explains Religion." The lecture will commence at 7 o'clock (doors open at 6.30), and will be held in the Market Street Picture House, Manchester. There will be a number of reserved seats at 1s. and 1s., and tickets can be obtained from the Secretary, Mr. W. Collins, 4, The Bungalows, Hayfield, Nr. Stockport. A number of advertising slips have been printed and all who can assist in their distribution are asked to write the Secretary stating the quantity required. The printed syllabus of the Branch announces

the lecture to be held in the Co-operative Hall, Downing Street, and friends are particularly asked to note the change of hall.

Once again we have to call attention to the gross ignorance of the law so often displayed by magistrates and magistrate's clerks. The latest case is taken from a Sunderland paper of February 28. The case occurred in a Sunderland Police Court:—

"There is no such thing as an Atheist, my friend," remarked the Magistrates' Clerk (Mr. F. Morton Smith) at Sunderland Police Court to-day, to William Davison, who accused Thomas William Hair, of Henry Street, of assault.

Hair, who pleaded not guilty, eventually agreed to be bound over to keep the peace for six months.

When Davison went into the witness-box he informed the Court that he was an Atheist, and therefore could not take the oath.

The Clerk: There is no form of oath in this country which an Atheist can take. You are an Agnostic. There is no such thing as an Atheist, my friend.

After legal books had been consulted Davison agreed to affirm as follows:—

I, William Davison, do solemnly and sincerely and truly declare and affirm that the evidence which I shall give shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

A greater piece of combined ignorance and impudence we have not come across for a long time. We will pass over the silliness of there being no such thing as an Atheist, the Bishop of London could not have beaten that for stupidity. But for a court official to inform a witness that he was really not an Atheist and to cap it by telling him that there was no "form of oath" that an Atheist could take, when an affirmation should have been offered, and then for a search of "legal books" having to be made before the form provided for by the Oath's Amendment Act of 1888 could be used, is an appalling exhibition of incompetence on the part of a clerk who is receiving a salary for the work he is expected to do. Cannot either the Home Secretary or the Lord Chancellor see that a circular is sent round to the police courts to instruct both magistrates and their clerks in this matter? We should like to see a question asked in Parliament about it.

Last Sunday evening was at its worst, so far as weather was concerned, and the audience at the King Edward Hall, was smaller than it might otherwise have been. But it was more than three parts full, nevertheless, and the attention given to the lecture indicated that North Finchley will be a profitable field for cultivation. More may be done there next season.

It seems almost impossible for the officials of the B.B.C. to give an honest answer to a straight question. Mr. W. Jones of Birmingham asked, through the *News-Chronicle*, whether B.B.C. preachers had to submit their sermons for censorship before they were put "on the air." To that the religious Director replies denying that "ministers of any denomination broadcasting from a place of worship" must submit their written sermons before delivery. No one imagines that a Church service, or even the sermon accompanying it, has to be submitted. But the question certainly included the sermons from the studio, and the Rev. Iremonger is true to the policy of the B.B.C. in answering in the form cited.

But even though certain preachers and certain speakers were not actually censored in fact, these would be trusted men who will take care to censor themselves, lest they be denied the chance of speaking any more. But a censorship cannot help lying, since the very act of censoring involves lying to those who look to it for information. Once more we say that the only way in which the doping of the public by the B.B.C. can be prevented is by men who value their own integrity, and have a sense of responsibility towards the public refusing to speak under existing conditions, and make known

that they have refused. We have seen the agitation against the B.B.C. grow very widely since we first set it going, and we have hopes that presently some of the papers will follow here as in other things

We note that Mr. Hamman Swaffer raises a protest in *John Bull* against the censorship of the B.B.C. We should like to see him equally ready to protest against the censorship of Freethought news that is carried on in the papers for which he writes. There are a great many people nowadays who are ready to shout when their own freedom of speech is threatened, but who regard it as quite proper to prevent this or that opposing opinion being heard, and think they are advancing their own cause in doing so. The only safe policy is freedom for all opinions whether right or wrong, and whether we consider them good or bad. Those who really value freedom of thought must stand out against the growth of intolerance, or see Europe retrograde to the state of things that existed several centuries ago.

Modern Issues Between Theologians and Scientists

A WHOLLY new controversy is emerging from the old, old conflict between theologians and naturalists. I believe most of the modern theologians have accepted nearly all the findings made by astronomers, physicists, biologists, etc. However, not so many of them have outgrown the religious temperament. In consequence of this fact, they have withdrawn their gods from the immediate and miraculous management of the details of our universe, and have transplanted them to the realms of a mystical pantheism or a transcendent and yet experiential theism. Accordingly we see a new importance in an ancient type of theologian, who has been often suppressed.

The old mystical heresies are becoming the new orthodoxy, and their challenge seems to invite a new kind of criticism or explanation. Theologians with a knowledge of modern science, and researchers in science with a mystical temperament, are combining their abilities to make the modern mystical gods seem reasonable. It now appears quite certain that our finite minds cannot destroy these mystical gods, with the old tools of astronomy, geology, physics, biology, etc. Since the evidence of these gods is found only in the ecstasies of a mystical experience, perhaps the new battle must be fought in the field of the psychologists.

Of course, the first criticisms of the older orthodoxy came from the pre-scientific naturalist. This criticism was hesitant, and limited to one or two concrete propositions about nature and its ways. Even that was then dangerous. Very slowly and painfully this criticism grew, from unimportant charges of the priestly ignorance of nature, to a doubting of the whole of the infallibility of the alleged wisdom of nature, on the part of the gods. Next came also doubts about the existence of *any* intelligent superintendent of this universe. Then followed some attempted explanations of how such beliefs came to be. Within that framework the very modern problems of the psychology of religion are developing.

That the gods were fashioned according to the physical characteristics of their human creators has been often affirmed. Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll has condensed the suggestion into a convincing paragraph, when he said: "The negroes represented their deities with black skin and curly hair. The Mongolian gave to them a yellow complexion and dark almond-shaped eyes. The Jews were not allowed to

paint theirs, or we should have seen Jehovah with a full beard, an oval face, and an aquiline nose. Zeus was a perfect Greek, and Jove looked as though a member of the Roman Senate. The gods of Egypt had the patient face and placid look of the loving people who made them. The gods of the northern countries were represented warmly clad within robes of fur; those of the tropics were naked. The gods of India were often mounted upon elephants; those of some islanders were great swimmers, and the deities of the Arctic zone were passionately fond of whale's blubber." Already we see important psychological implications.

Some general suggestions have also been made that the mental characteristics of the gods were like those of their human creators. Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach (1804-1872) was the first person to give religion an extensive critical consideration, as a problem of psychology. However, he seems to have used mainly the introspective method for acquiring his understanding of, and his objective appraisal of, theological mysteries. It is also apparent that he did not yet consciously distinguish theology from religion. The distinguishing feature of the latter is now regarded as a matter of temperamental attitude, subjective experience, and of a method. Religionists generally regard theologies as being superhuman answers to the cravings of the religious temperament, or a supernatural explanation for some mysterious or mystical human experiences. Feuerbach developed his theories, as to "The Essence of Religion," in the 'thirties and 'forties of the last century. He saw the psychology of the religious problem with a clearer insight, and with a more realistic sense of values, than any one before him. Only a few modern psychiatrists have a clearer perception of the mental mechanism of a split personality than had Feuerbach. However, he is not easy reading. In such writings as his, the emphatic method of reading is very necessary. Modern psychologists have only amplified his picture of the religionist's mental process, changed his terminology and justified his theory by the use of the psycho-analytic method of observation. Feuerbach's theory has been improved upon, but it is not basically contradicted by modern research.

His thesis was this: The assumed antithesis of divine and human is a delusion. (Even some mystics now agree with this conclusion, but disagree with his valuation as interpretation of the fact). According to Feuerbach, the divine being is nothing else than the human being idealized, freed from the limitations of the individual man, and then delusionally objectified. All attributes of the divine are idealized attributes of human nature, and the worship of God is only a delusional phase of self-worship. Therefore, in religion the "consciousness of the [divine] object and self-consciousness coincide . . . the object of any [religious] subject is nothing else than the subject's own nature taken objectively. As are man's thoughts and dispositions, such is his God. . . . By his God thou knowest the man, and by the man his God; the two are identical. Whatever is God to man, that is his heart and soul; and conversely, God is the manifested inward nature, the expressed self of man . . . Religion is the solemn unveiling of a man's hidden treasures ["unconsciousness?"] the revelation of his intimate thoughts, the open confession of his love-secrets."

"Religion is the disuniting of man from himself [split personality]. He sets God before him as the antithesis of himself. God is not what man is . . . man is not what God is. God is the infinite, man the finite being; God is perfect, man is imperfect; God eternal, man temporal; God almighty, man weak; God holy, man sinful. God and man are extremes:

God is the absolutely positive, the sum of all realities; man the absolutely negative, comprehending all negations." (p. 33, second edition, London, 1881.)

In Feuerbach's day this inner psychologic conflict was accepted as inevitable. Theologians often thought of it as a conflict between imps of hell and angels of heaven for mastery over the human soul. Now we are coming to look upon it as a conflict between our desire for self-expression and our desire to please those in authority who demand self-suppression; sometimes between conscious wishes and unconscious urges. The only remedy for the inner conflict that was suggested by the irreligious persons of Feuerbach's day, was that "right reason" should dominate those impulses that made for religion and theology; that the divided interests of man should become one, by submitting to the dominance of reason, rather than to the doubtful will of a delusional God. In that "age of reason," it was thought that reason was a faculty apart from the emotions and impulses, and as such an independent force capable of dominating them. The unknown self, that which some thought to rationalize in terms of materialistic logic, the theologians often made into God. What the latter wanted was a union of the sinful self with God. This was to be accomplished by a kind of self-exaltation toward godhood. This could only come by subordinating the impulses of the flesh to the alleged will of God. The irreligious ones sought to destroy the belief in God, by subordinating human nature to the mandates of reason. Reason was then very often thought of as the uncaused product of a free will. In the newer psychology the alleged freedom of the will is ignored. Nowadays the problem of religion and of the God-delusion, if it be that, is coming to be regarded as a problem of mental hygiene, or one of uniting the irreconcilable tendencies within man, by subordinating both impulses, and both forms of their rationalization to the observed behaviour of human energy in the process of further psychologic maturing. By some psychologists, the authority of properly observed psychologic facts is now thought superior to either logic or "God." Both finite and theological reasoning must be supplanted by ever better observation, and by the further maturing of our psychologic processes. For Feuerbach "reason was the private God of man; the personal God is the heart of man, emancipated from the limits or laws of nature." (p. 287.) According to some modern psychologists, we will soon outgrow both the gods of reason and those of the heart.

I have quoted Feuerbach's words. Expressed in modern terminology, and in harmony with modern psychologic theories, the facts that he saw may be described thus: God is a wish-fulfilling fantasy, created or adopted to neutralize a painful feeling of delusional guilty-inferiority. God is the kind of being that we should like to be, or that we should like to have others think us to be. Some persons attempt a combination-compromise between plain human nature and its delusional superhuman idealization. Perhaps modern humanism is one product of such unconscious compromises. God is our idealized and "unconscious" self, expressed as a mask, or as the fancied realization of a delusionally-exalted self, imaginatively projected or extended into the outer realms. Thus the religious temperament always reveals a split personality. At times this is accompanied by a pathologic degree of intensity. Feuerbach expressed that in these words: "The real object [of the religionist] is pathology, the imaginary one is theology; i.e., pathology is converted into theology. . . . Theology is nothing else than an unconscious, esoteric pathology, anthropology and

psychology. . . . This is nothing more than an imaginary psychology and anthropology." Now the avowed aim of mystical religion is to accomplish a union between the sinful, limited human being and the sinless, all-powerful, idealized self, called God . . . between the delusional over-valuation of our so-called "sins" and the equally delusional over-valued self, "God." The mystical theologians interpret the "mystical" experience as being such a union. Is that a delusion or a fact? Some psycho-analysts think it a delusion, and so conclude that it is better to "cure" the "split personality." By some, such a psychologic recovery is thought of as a psychologic discipline which matures the impulses and intellectual methods above the evolutionary level of the inner conflict of impulses; a conflict between desire and an irreconcilable (though purely artificial) duty. The psychiatrist's cure is a realistic union of the disrupted personality. For the naturalist, who looks for immediate practical results, that is preferred.¹ To him, that which the mystic theologian offers is only a delusional union of delusional symptoms, which cannot accomplish a real healing.

THEODORE SCHROEDER.

(To be concluded)

Religion in Australia

GROWTH OF UNBELIEF

ILLUMINATING CENSUS RETURNS

WHEN Cardinal MacRory, the papal legate, reached Melbourne, to take part in the eucharistic demonstrations, he declared that the campaign against Christianity was fast becoming world-wide. Although it is questionable whether any world-wide effort is being made to combat Christianity it is clear that there is definite feeling of revulsion against the Christian Church. If this unorganized movement is making the same progress in other countries as it is making in Victoria, Australia, there is justification for great satisfaction. This is not a case of talking without the book, for the opinion is based on the illuminating religious percentages published in January of this year by the Commonwealth Census Bureau, and they are as follow :

Religion	Adherents	Percentage of Population
Church of England	626,172	34.4
Roman Catholic	315,516	17.3
Catholic (undefined)	26,619	1.4
Presbyterian	276,699	15.2
Methodist	193,096	10.6
Baptist	31,427	1.7
No religion	235,566	12.9
Other religions	115,166	6.2

No one would be greatly surprised to see that the Church of England heads the list for it gains adherents in multifarious and devious ways. For business reasons many people consider that it is absolutely necessary to acknowledge a Christian Church and they conveniently dub themselves Anglicans, although they may not enter a religious edifice from one year's end to another. Then, too, as Victoria is British, other people mix their loyalty to England with religion, and describe themselves as worshippers at the church, which after all was created by the Eng-

¹ What is a Psychologic Recovery? *Psychoanalytic Review*, April, 1934.

lish Parliament. A good proportion of Anglicans is also found in certain Government establishments, which need not be specified here.

It is, of course, safe to assume that the figures given for the Roman Catholics represent the full numerical strength of that sect. The hierarchy through the priests has the laity so well disciplined that no devout Roman Catholic would fail to indicate his belief at the taking of the census, when it is so important to make the number of adherents as high as possible. Nevertheless the onlooker notices with interest that the Church which claims to have been built by Christ and the heavenly father on the rock of St. Peter occupies second place in the list with only 17 per cent of the population of Victoria. Surely an omnipotent power should see that his representatives produce better form.

Undoubtedly the most significant figures refer to the people with no religion, who are nearly as numerous as either the Roman Catholics or the Presbyterians, and who are more numerous than either the Methodists or the Baptists. This fact is the more amazing because those Victorians are unorganized. They are not called upon to make regular contributions to a body that aims at propagating rigid views, and that has laid up for itself vast "treasures on earth: where the rust and moth consume, and where thieves break through and steal." Those people are not members of an institution that has received grants of land from the Government, and still more valuable taxation concessions. Nor do they maintain a host of officials, who on one day in the week gabble through prepared prayers and dreary sermons, extracts from which are invariably sure of a conspicuous place in the columns of the daily press. Despite their handicaps those with no religion form 12 per cent of the population of the State. Obviously the six per cent supporting other religions are not Christians, and so the anti-Christian section totals more than either the Roman Catholic or the Presbyterian.

If this great body of people would only bestir itself, it could effectively counteract anything done in the name of Christian action or Catholic action, which is said to be so dear to the heart of the Pope. In one respect the census figures are cheering, but it is regrettable that more of the 18 per cent, or at least of the 12 per cent, do not exert themselves against the influence of the churches. Even unorganized, those with no religion are a force in Victoria, but organized they could perform marvellous things in sweeping aside superstition and many of the evils associated with it.

H.D.

Melbourne.

CHRISTIANITY AND THE SLAVE TRADE

All the principal early Fathers, with the possible exception of St. Gregory of Nyassa, seem to have let slavery go practically unchallenged. Origen reproached some of his flock for having too many bondmen, but he apparently did not advocate their manumission. Clement of Alexandria, Tertulian, and Justin Martyr, counselled their kindly treatment; and St. Jerome reminded the faithful, following Paul, that all men are equal in the sight of God, but Cyril of Jerusalem argued that slavery was lawful and probably good, and the mighty Augustine, as one reads in *De Civitate Dei*, regarded it as a just punishment of sin. With the dawn of feudalism in the West, the chief dignitaries of the Church became feudal barons always in fact, and often also in name, and as such they held slaves and serfs and bought and sold them. Gregory the Great was the largest slave-owner of the sixth century. . . .

Shakespeare and Jesus Christ

ONE evening, some years ago, I was lecturing on the Freethought view of Jesus Christ. It was in London, and the gentleman who came to the platform to criticize my lecture was the Secretary of the Christian Evidence Society. Mr. Engström scarcely replied to my arguments, but he told several anecdotes, one of which related to Charles Lamb. According to Mr. Engström, Lamb remarked, in a certain conversation, that if Shakespeare entered the room they would all stand up, but if Jesus Christ entered they would all fall upon their knees. That, said Mr. Engström, was the natural attitude of men towards the Prophet of Nazareth. They could not help worshipping him, and that was an instinctive recognition of his divinity.

I am an intense admirer of Charles Lamb. He was an infinitely more beautiful character than Thomas Carlyle, who sneered at him, and I believe that some of his prose is as sure of immortality as any written in the present century. I flattered myself that I knew every scrap of Lamb's writing, and almost every scrap of what had been written about him. But I did not remember Mr. Engström's anecdote. All I could do, therefore, on the spur of the moment, was to assume its truth and reply to it accordingly. I said that standing up if Shakespeare entered the room would be a natural mark of respect to his colossal genius. The very attitude of sitting would be too slovenly at the first accost of that tremendous spirit. All our faculties, mental and bodily, would be strung to their highest tension by his sudden advent. But going on our knees was an irrational attitude, and if we fell into it at the approach of Jesus Christ it would only show the humiliating nature of superstition and the power of early religious training.

It is always well, however, to suspect the accuracy of Christian Evidence speakers. They are not trained in a school of precision, and are apt to be as loose in statement as they are flimsy in argument. I knew that Lamb was a Deist. He did not accept Revelation or embrace the deity of Christ. Consequently I felt certain that there was a mistake somewhere; perhaps not a very great one in mere form, but probably a considerable one in substance. That feeling has since been justified. I have recently been dipping again into William Hazlitt—a fine writer, though not so profound and quintessential as Lamb. Hazlitt is very voluminous, and one of his essays had escaped my attention. It is on "Persons One Would Wish to Have Seen," and is an account of one of those famous evenings at Elia's. Lamb got into one of his subtle and solemn moods, shot through with a certain fantasticality which so often annoyed solemn people who were not subtle. He said that he would like to see Guy Fawkes and Judas Iscariot. This rather startled the company, but the reasons given were allowed to be excellent. "Oh! ever right, Menenius—ever right!" exclaimed Lamb, who was now in the full tide of his wild profundity. What followed shall be given in Hazlitt's own words:—

"There is only one other person I can think of after this," continued Lamb; but without mentioning a name that once put on a semblance of mortality. "If Shakespeare was to come into this room, we should all rise up to meet him; but if that person was to come into it, we should all fall down and try to kiss the hem of His garment."

The story in this form evidently does not serve Mr. Engström's purpose. Lamb said nothing about falling on one's knees in the attitude of worship. No doubt he would have regarded that as a species of blasphemy, or at least of idolatry. Kissing the hem

of Christ's garment is quite another matter. It is a token of overwhelming respectful affection, not of prostrate slavish adoration. It is an expression of feeling by gesture which goes beyond words, just as a lover who kisses his mistress's glove, or a bit of lace that has adorned her dear person, betrays his love more convincingly than he could do by the finest sonnet or the most rapturous epistle.

I do not pause to consider whether Jesus Christ was really deserving of this tribute of speechless affection. It is enough to say, at present, that Lamb's sentiment would have been endorsed by Rousseau and Renan (for instance), both of whom denied the deity of Mr. Engström's "Saviour." And, after all, there is no argument in emotion, which is necessarily personal and incommunicable. When we discuss we must step out into the dry light of the intellect, where feelings only count as facts, not as authorities.

For my part, I do not accept Jesus Christ as a really historical character. I do not say—I am not in a position to say: no one is in a position to say—that there was or was not an actual personage who served as the nucleus of all that collection of legend and mythology which appears in the Gospels. But I am confident that the picture of Jesus Christ handed down to us is an ideal one, wrought by the pious fancy of many generations. On the whole, it is as imaginary as Hamlet or Othello, as we find them in the plays of Shakespeare; or, to take a more appropriate parallel, as King Arthur, the fabulous hero of early English romance. One has only to read some of the Lives of Christ written by modern Christians to realize the full certainty of this fact. There is endless re-weaving of the old material, but not a fresh gleam of actual history in whole acres of such productions.

Shakespeare, on the other hand, is indubitably an historical personage. Those who say we know very little about him talk very ignorantly. We know more about him than about any other playwright in the mighty constellation of which he was the central sun. The wonder really is, not that we know so little, but that we know so much. As for the cranks who argue that Shakespeare's plays were written by Lord Bacon, one can only stand aghast at the grotesqueness of their monomania. Not an argument can they advance which is not shivered into dust by the plainest facts of the case.

Take all the best things in the Gospels, and suppose them to have been really uttered by Jesus Christ, though nearly all of them were current before he appeared. What proportion does the total bear to the gold and jewels of Shakespeare's genius? We are somewhat blinded to the depth of Shakespeare's humanity by the splendour of his intellect. He dazzles us so that we are apt to lose sight of the streams of tenderness that sweeten the territory of his mind. Wordsworth wrote of Milton as one whose soul was like a star and dwelt apart. But the soul of Shakespeare was no solitary star—"pinnacled dim in the intense inane." It was a royal sun, raining out its beams with inexhaustible generosity. He took the whole world in his loving embrace; he blessed the saints and heroes, pitied the cowards and villains, and smiled benignly on the very fools. The world will have to change, and human nature alter itself, before his vivifying glory grows dim. Ben Jonson was most inspired when he said that Shakespeare was "not of an age, but for all time."

(Reprinted.)

G. W. FOOTE.

"Thoughts for Freethinkers"

MGR. CANON WILLIAM BARRY, D.D., some years ago wrote a very poor booklet entitled *Thoughts for Freethinkers*, which is now re-issued by the Catholic "Truth" Society, apparently without any attempt at alteration, addition, or modernization. It was dedicated to "Any and Every Young Man," so that the title itself is quite misleading. The present edition is "Printed in Ireland," where perhaps it is welcomed as suitable for offering to young men spoon-fed by priests and censors.

We wonder if Dr. Barry's work is regarded as scientific and philosophical in a land where science and philosophy are strictly "edited," and even Truth is only such "truth" as is approved by Vatican City and its Divine Monarch the Pope.

The author begs the reader, "Do not fancy me as a priest or parson, but only as a man." We are surprised at Dr. Barry wishing anyone to regard him as a man—his booklet seems incapable of speaking decently of manhood, or of anyone who is not a Roman Catholic priest or teacher.

One gathers that the only kind of "Freethinker" this priest ever heard of spent his life teaching people to be liars, thieves, and assassins. He quotes in this connexion "Mill, Huxley, Tyndall, Spencer, Haeckel, and a thousand more"—

If you follow the rebels, you take the broad road, from Free Love, which the voice of conscience calls Free Leprosy, by Malthusian degradation, to frivolity, sadness, despair, and death which looks for no awakening. The individual and the nation that walk on this path will perish. There is no hope for them.

And it is clear that you will never find a Christian—at least not a Vatican City Christian—in prison, or guilty of "leprosy," or frivolous, or sad, or even dead.

Incidentally, Canon Barry condemns tobacco and alcohol in words which seem written for the Methodists of America demanding prohibition of both. A drinker and smoker: "do you call him a man? Not rather a bundle of refuse . . . soaked in putrefaction." "His lips are defiled," partly by his cigarette and partly by "his foul talk and the other things which are not to be hinted at in a decent style." (Can Dr. Barry be suggesting that the miscreant has been buying tickets for the Dublin Hospital Sweepstake?)

It is as well that Dr. Barry called his book "Thoughts For"—and not Thoughts Of—a Freethinker. It is, of course, mere mud-throwing. The Freethinker of this scurrilous pamphlet is a queer animal. He is "a Radical or Socialist in the pay of a Tory journal; by conviction a Reformer, he scoffs at his own cherished ideals." We shall hear next that Mr. Chapman Cohen edits the *Morning Post*, or perhaps that the Bishop of London edits *No More War*. As to the *Daily Herald*—but we are still wondering about that.

One thing Freethinkers should welcome in all these attacks. Dr. Barry and all other religious haters of Secularism admit that Birth Control owes a great debt to Freethinkers. "I need not tell you," says Barry, referring to Bradlaugh and other famous neo-Malthusians, "that none of these men were Christians." Some day Christians will realize that this is a very high compliment to our cause. Barry modestly refuses to mention any woman by name in this crusade from Mrs. Besant to Dr. Stopes, but sneers at these brave women by saying, "It is melancholy to record that women took their part" in a movement which has brought hope and health to millions of their sex.

By way of contrast to the Secularists' attitude to Birth Control, the author stigmatizes it as "Race-Suicide, Race-Murder, Crime, Vice, Poisoning the wells of life, a foul offence, and a human horror."

But Birth Control and cigarette smoking are not the only wickednesses of the Freethinker. Look at those Atheistic Big Business "Trusts, Combines, and Corners"; these are born of "Not Christ the Carpenter's son," but "the kings of steel, oil, cotton, corn," etc., coupled (as the Toast-master says) with the names of "the Goulds, Rockefellers, Vanderbilts, Carnegies, Hooleys, Barnatos," and others, whose association with the National Secular Society is so well-known.

The foolishness of a wise man is apt to be more catastrophic in its consequence than his wisdom. It is taken up by a much larger number.—*Quodam*.

The Lords of Mammon, says Dr. Barry, are "idolators" and "excommunicate from God's people," but this only means that some of them "communicated" with, and were pillars of, Protestant and other religions. We never heard of any of these gentry being "excommunicated" from any church anywhere, but we have heard of churches, and cathedrals, still using golden and other "communion plate" (the gifts of communicants like E. T. Hooley) and liking it. In earlier days rich men were occasionally tortured—not for grinding the faces of the poor, but to induce them to share the swag with their pious friends. In any case, excommunication to-day in a civilized country is meaningless.

Naturally this pamphlet reminds us that Huxley on the School Board pleaded for the use of the Bible "as an instrument of popular education." It proceeds to quote "Huxley's memorable words that the Bible has been the Magna Charta of the poor and oppressed." Then Mill's, Renan's and other rationalists' "testimonials" to Jesus are given, but at its very best the total makes an unsubstantial basis for the author's flatulent apostrophe:—

History and philosophy, theory and practice! Behold where they join hands to bear up Christ as the King of Men.

Canon Barry claims that if you follow Jesus "your words will be true," but our experiences, as well as the evidence provided in the booklet under review, convince us that people can remain liars even after following Jesus for quite a long time. Canon Barry tells us that when once you deny his "Free Will" doctrine you are likely to, or bound to commit "outrages on the helpless, frauds in every direction, and self-inflicted death." There are degrees even in the wicked ranks of Freethinkers. "Agnostic, and, of course, much more, Atheistic thought . . . is the barren fig-tree, redundant in leaves," so, following his Divine Exemplar, Canon Barry proceeds to curse it.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

Correspondence

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

SIR,—I should be glad if you will kindly grant me facility in your columns to correct a mis-statement which appeared in a recent article by your contributor "Mimnermus," in which he declared that my father, the late Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, denounced Materialists "with very unsavoury rhetoric."

This wholly unwarrantable assertion, which has not a word of truth in it, is typical of the peculiar perversion of fact of which many of those who have opposed my father's Spiritualistic activities have been guilty. Actually, my father invariably combined the innate courtesy which characterized every aspect of his whole life and personality, with frankness and truth of statement.

Your contributor does himself very little credit by committing himself to unworthy and entirely untrue assertions at the attempted expense of a man who was justly renowned for his invariable courtesy, both in public matters and in private.

DENIS P. S. CONAN DOYLE.

National Secular Society

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD MARCH 1, 1935

THE President, Mr. C. Cohen, in the chair.

Also present: Messrs. Quinton, Clifton, Silvester, Easterbrook (W. J. W.) Ebury, Preece, Saphin, Mrs. Quinton, Jur., Mrs. Venton, Mrs. Grant, and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and accepted, Financial Statement presented.

New members were admitted to Bradford, Glasgow, Blackburn, Birkenhead, West Ham, North London, West London, Branches, and the Parent Society. A very

successful Annual Dinner was reported, and January 25 was selected as the date of the 1936 Dinner. The Secretary was instructed to proceed with arrangements for a summer campaign by Mr. G. Whitehead. The President reported a series of successful meetings in the provinces, at which he was the speaker. Details of correspondence were dealt with from Swansea, Glasgow, Birkenhead, Birmingham, International Federation of Freethinkers, and Mr. J. T. Brighton. Mr. Clifton, delegate to the League of Nations' Conference, presented a report of proceedings. Invitations for the Annual Conference were received from Glasgow and Manchester, and the Secretary reported that voting papers had been sent out to all Branches of the N.S.S. A number of routine items were dealt with, and the meeting closed.

The next meeting of the Executive will be on Friday, March 29.

R. H. ROSETTI,

General Secretary.

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.3): 7.30, Annual General Meeting. Members only.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7.0, Lord Snell, C.B.E.—"London and the City Beautiful."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C1): 11.0, Prof. F. Aveling, D.Sc.—"The Conquest of Pain: Mental and Bodily Attitudes."

STUDY CIRCLE (63 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, March 11, Mr. A. D. McLaren—"Truth as an Ethical Factor."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. ("The Laurie Arms," Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, E. Saphin—"The Stupidities of Jesus."

COUNTRY

INDOOR

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Shakespeare Rooms, Edmund Street, Birmingham): 7.30, Debate—"Christ, Myth or Man?"

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Jowett Hall, Leeds Road, Bradford): 7.30, Mr. J. Clayton—"The Challenge of Atheism."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. George Goodwill (Burnley)—"Maggots and Men."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, R. T. White—"Rome or Reason?"

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Chapman Cohen—"How Science Explains Religion."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Milton Hall, 12a Daulby Street, Liverpool, off London Road, by the Majestic Cinema): 7.0, W. T. Wood (Chester)—"Freethought—An Outlook on Life."

MIDDLESBOROUGH (Bizacta Hall, Newton Street): 7.0, Tuesday, March 12, Mr. J. T. Brighton, A Lecture.

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Plymouth Chambers, Drake Circus): 7.0, Mr. Brown—"Seeking Truth."

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N.S.S. (The Labour Hall, Laygate): 7.30, Friday, March 8, A Flanders—A Lecture.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Green Street, Sunderland): 7.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"Salvation and Tragedy."

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For details see Lecture Notices

Conway Memorial Lecture

DR. G. P. GOOCH will deliver the Twenty-Sixth Lecture entitled "Dictatorship in Theory and Practice," at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1, on Wednesday, March 13. Chair to be taken by Mr. JOHN A. HOBSON, at 7 p.m.

Admission Free.

Reserved Seats 1s.

Tickets to be obtained from Conway Hall.

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