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EDITED by CHAPMAN COHEN

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Views and Opinions

A Study in Delusion
English Messiahs; Studies of Six English Religious Pretenders, by Ronald Matthews (Methuen, 10s. 6d., illustrated), is a book that will be full of interest to very many people, and of interest and instruction to those who know how to read it properly. The six "Pretenders" are James Naylor, "The Quaker's Jesus" (1618-1660); Johanna Southcote, "The Bride of the Lord" (1710-1814); Richard Brothers, "God Almighty's Nephew" (1757-1824); John Nichols Tom, "The Peasant's Saviour" (1799-1838); Henry James Prince (a re-incarnated Jesus) (1811-1899); and J. H. Smyth-Piggott, successor to Prince in rule and re-incarnation (1852-1927). To those acquainted with the real history of religion, and of the way in which religions have been partly built on, and at all stages perpetuated by, identifying the abnormal and the pathologic with intercourse with the "Divine," Mr. Matthews' book will come as a summary of well-known facts, which might well have had a larger and more important application than the author gives it. Mr. Matthews contributes a concluding chapter, in which he surveys the implications and significance of the cases studied, and one suspects that he could have said more, but that might have stood in the way of the publication of his interesting work. Nearly twenty years ago I dealt with the importance to religion of the misunderstanding and misinterpretation of both normal and abnormal mental states, but there is, of course, a difference when one has to write without alarming publishers or offending possible readers. There is, for example, a decided significance about Mr. Matthews' sub-title "Studies of Six English Religious Pretenders." Why "pretenders"? In what way were any of these six "pretenders" different from other religious leaders, or those who were not leaders? Of course, if they were mere impostors, deceiving others but not deceiving them-

selves, they may be relegated to the ranks of rogues and vagabonds, to which class they would properly belong, with all those who consciously ape religion for purposes of sheer fraud, or who write religion because they desire to live by their pen. But if they were not impostors—and there is not the slightest evidence that any of the six were—if they really believed that they were in intimate touch with God, that God spoke through them, or that a god was incarnate in them, by what rule are they differentiated from those who are fully credited with all that the "pretenders" claimed? Is there any fundamental difference between the claims, say, of the biblical prophets, and those of the "six"? What is the distinction between Isaiah or Elijah proclaiming to the people that they bring a message from God and James Naylor? Is there any difference in kind between the story of Jesus curing disease by faith, prayer and incantation, and the cure of disease by an African witch-doctor by fundamentally identical methods? Why should a new revelation from God, when proclaimed by Prince or Smyth-Piggott, be considered less credible than when it is proclaimed either by or on behalf of Jesus? Why should this religious conviction be accepted in the one case and rejected in the other? Is it any more than a difference of time and place and the general level of culture? Born in one age any one of the six might easily have founded a new and a great religion. Born in another age they are placed in the stocks, whipped at the cart-wheel, and condemned by posterity as lunatics. One may have to pay as heavy a price for being born late as for being born too soon. Is the difference between the accepted messenger from God and the "pretender" any other than that between success and failure, or of living in different periods?

It is these questions that logically emerge from a study of Mr. Matthews' work, and it is their emergence that gives the book its chief value. But while the book has been well noticed, I have not come across a single review that has paid attention to them. They have all dealt with the work as though it were a mere chronicle of knavery and delusion. But the real value of the book is the light that the study of the six named throws on similar beliefs held by men in all ages and in all countries, and the determination of the causes that eventuate in one man being hailed as a messenger from God, or as an incarnation of God, and in another case being accepted at his own value and so founding a new religion.

* * *

Pathology of Religion

Mr. Matthews glimpses this question and the difficulty of answering it in a scientific manner without striking a heavy blow at all religious belief. He even attempts to counter the conclusion by two pleas. The first is almost an evasion of the issue. He says that religious ideas have no necessary connexion with

pathologic mental states, but as religion is instilled into the child when it is very young, it is natural that an abnormality or a neurosis should find expression in a religious form. Granted; but the scientific point of view is not that religion begins wholly, or even largely, in neurotic conditions, but that pathologic and abnormal conditions have, from the earliest time until to-day, been taken as evidence for the truth of religious beliefs. After all, whatever we may be or call ourselves, it is the same world with which we all have to deal, and the difference between the religionist and the non-religionist is essentially a difference of interpretation.

Mr. Matthews' second plea seems to mis-state the point at issue. He admits that:—

It cannot be denied that a great many forms which Christianity has taken, a great many forms of religious zeal within it, have shown strong grounds of neurosis,

but he adds that to claim that its "central core is a neurotic product, seems an argument open to the strongest criticism." The reason for this is that the teaching of Jesus Christ came to his followers as a "radical psychotherapy, a cure." But the quality of an ethical teaching that may accompany a religious doctrine has nothing whatever to do with the matter. Assuming the Jesus Christ of the New Testament to be an historical character—an almost impossible conclusion to anyone who boldly faces the facts—Jesus might have been quite normal in his ethical outlook, while still deriving the authority for his ethical teaching from conditions that had their part-origin, and certainly their perpetuation, in conclusions that a knowledge of medical science has scattered to the winds. The New Testament Jesus clearly believed that epilepsy and insanity were due to possession by devils. He clearly believed himself to have been brought into contact with a literal devil, he believed that, with the aid of God, he could work miracles, he believed that he was in intimate connexion with God, and that God would send him "legions of angels" to defend him if desired.

The point here then is as to the extent to which men and women have attributed their impulses and ideals—good and bad, wise and foolish—to supernatural influences and direction, and the cause of their adopting that interpretation. The quality of these impulses have nothing whatever to do with the issue. Ethical impulses are plainly derived from the social life from which the religious teacher springs, but the reasons he offers for their existence are based upon the experience of states of mind that are now declared by science to be psychopathic in their nature. I have dealt with this aspect of the subject in my *Religion and Sex* (published in 1919, but written some years earlier), and Professor Leuba has discussed the same question in his *Psychology of Religious Mysticism* (1929), but I do not see that Mr. Matthews clearly faces the issue, although he obviously has it in mind. There is no ground whatever for drawing a radical distinction between the character of Jesus Christ (assuming his existence) and that of other religious figures in ancient and modern times. Science can admit no necessary radical difference between the obsession of any of the characters named by him, and those of religious leaders in all ages, and that of the alleged founder of the Christian religion. Identical phenomena must be subject to identical explanation, whether found in ancient Judea or in modern London. In the history of the world the existence of men who have felt themselves to be sent by God, who have worked wonders in the name of God, and who have been accepted at their own valuation, is an ever recurring phenomenon. And the belief that a man is sent by God is of no

better, and no other texture, than the belief that a man is an agent of the devil. The only difference discernible is one of culture. In one age mankind worships a man as visibly inspired by God whom it sends to prison or an asylum at another period. Mr. Matthews, to my mind, seems to feel this position throughout his concluding chapter, but does not meet it. He argues that there is a difference between a religion that is obviously based on misunderstood or abnormal states of mind, and one which lifts from men "the burden of anxiety." But this seems a distinction invented to escape a difficulty, and not one that arises from the facts.

* * *

Ancient and Modern

The truth of what has just been said would have appeared obvious to the careful reader of Mr. Matthews' book, had the author used the six characters selected for treatment as particular illustrations of world-wide phenomena that become increasingly common as we get farther back in the record of human culture. Not only is it true that abnormal and pathologic mental states have always provided the needed evidence of the supernatural to keep religion alive, but in the use of drugs, fasting, solitary meditation, and the cultivation of a spirit of morbid introspection, mankind has made for itself proofs of the existence of a "spiritual world." In medical science it is a generally recognized truth that the study of the normal throws light on the abnormal, and *vice versa*. The same is true of at least one branch of the study of religion. In regard to other religions the modern Christian recognizes this freely and fully. I emphasize the word "modern," because the earliest Christians did not draw any line between the supposed manifestations of the supernatural that occurred among themselves and that which occurred among others. The only difference was, they insisted, that *their* manifestations came from God, while the manifestations that appeared to others came from the Devil. But it is quite clear that if we take from historic Christianity this sense of intercourse between man and devils or God, if we take from it the influence of visions and ecstatic states induced by abnormal methods of living, or by the distortions and perversions of a tortured sex nature, the stream of testimony to the truth of Christianity flows very shallow indeed.

Mr. Matthews has done good work in writing *English Messiahs*; I have only dotted the i's and crossed the t's of his book. And I will close this notice by a quotation from the conclusion of my own *Religion and Sex*, as offering what I consider to be a sound generalization:—

Imagine that after primitive ignorance had created the supernatural, it had come to an abrupt stop when man had emerged from the purely savage state. Suppose a generation born, not without knowledge of what their progenitors believed, but with a sufficient knowledge of their own to correct their ancestors' errors. Suppose that generation in a position to recognize insanity, disease, delusion, hysteria, hallucination for what they are. Assume them to be under no delusion concerning the nature of man, physically or mentally. Would the religious idea have persisted as it has done? Granted that religion would still have continued to exist as an ultimate philosophy of nature that appealed to some minds, as other systems of philosophy number their disciples, would it have been the dominating power it has been? What under such conditions would have become of that evidence for the supernatural, accepted generation after generation, but which is now rejected by all educated minds? Where would have been that long array of seers, prophets, illuminati, whose credentials have been found in states of mind that are now seen to be pathological

in character? For, remember, it was not always—very seldom, in fact—the justice or the reasonableness of the teachings set forth that won support, but generally the “signs and wonders” that were pointed to as evidence of the divine commission of the teachers. Assume, then, that these “signs and wonders” had been wanting, and that for thousands of years people had looked at natural phenomena from the standpoint of the educated mind of to-day, what would have been the present position of the religious idea?*

That, I think, is the right point of view from which to study Mr. Matthews' very interesting book. I imagine he would describe his book as delusions associated with Christianity. I would prefer to describe it, more accurately, I think, as a study of the raw material of the religious life.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Predatory Press-Gang

“I don't believe in principle,
But, oh, I do in interest.”

Lowell, “*Pious Editor's Creed.*”

“Stuffing the ears of men with false reports.”

Shakespeare.

At a time when newspapers are less free than at any other recent period of their history, it is ironic to recall the perfervid language of the earlier editors in praise of the “glorious free press” of Britain. Charles Dickens, in the early days of the *Daily News*; G. W. M. Reynolds, in *Reynolds' News*, and Douglas Jerrold, in *Lloyd's News*, all believed in the missionary power of the press, and used the columns of their widely-read journals to further the cause of democracy and humanism. To them a newspaper was as much a vehicle of ideas as a purveyor of news. Even as late as the closing years of the Victorian era this ethical point of view was represented in the London press by Passmore Edwards, who conducted the *Echo* for a whole generation without giving racing results, which he thought promoted gambling. At the time of the Oscar Wilde trial, the editor of the *St. James's Gazette* flatly refused to print a full report, and reminded his readers that his paper was intended for decent people, and if they wanted dirt they could purchase rival papers.

All this is now changed, and not by any means for the better. The power of the once powerful editors and the writers has been constantly diminishing of late years, and the power of the commercially-minded and often illiterate proprietors as constantly increasing. The power behind the press is now the advertisement manager, for trade “puffs” are the arteries of the modern press. Journalists can neither do justice to themselves nor serve the public honestly, in a newspaper press dominated by advertisers and vested interests. In spite of their commercial rivalry, the British newspapers are of one mind in suppressing advanced thought, which is understood by its business-like proprietors to be fatal to fat dividends. The conspiracy of silence against Freethought is passing wonderful. The newspapers devote columns of print to the most brutal and disgusting murder cases, and report the salacious details of police-court cases. When the supply of such horrors runs short in this country, the editors report cases from American and Continental newspapers. In the summer-time, when space is more plentiful, there is always the sea-serpent, or the discovery of alleged relics of “Noah's Ark,” fortune-telling, or

other imbecilities. In the midst of the dreadful world-war, room was actually found for circumstantial accounts of “angels” on the battle-fields, or of alleged miraculous happenings to stone statues of the “Madonna.” Let there be no mistake at all on this point. Journalists are not microcephalous idiots, but sane, hard-working men. The writers of this delirious rubbish do not all believe it. It is not entirely due to fanaticism or ignorance, but is simply done to “tickle the ears of the groundlings,” and to promote immense circulations. It is, in the last analysis, simply a dirty trick of big business. Journalists know better than that Freethinkers are weak, foolish, and ill-conditioned persons, but they wish to curry favour with the many-headed and soft-hearted orthodox. The imbecilities of the Bishop of London, and the verbal hysterics of itinerant evangelists, are reported frequently in the newspapers, but the leaders of Freethought seldom have a line devoted to their work.

The result of this concerted conspiracy of ignorance is that the myriads of readers of British newspapers are kept in blissful ignorance of the intellectual ferment that is going on in the world of to-day. This applies equally to the periodical press, and the monthly reviews, as to newspapers. The reviews used to have thought-compelling articles by leading scientists, such as Clifford, Huxley and Tyn-dall, but now they are “respectable” and they are as sloppy and sentimental as the popular daily and weekly press. Where, to-day, are editors like William T. Stead, who pilloried the vices of modern Babylon, or John Morley, who used to spell the word “God” with a small “g,” or press proprietors like Henry Labouchère, who feared nothing, and beat all records in libel actions brought against him by scoundrels?

The trouble is that the unfortunate present-day editors and journalists are not permitted to be masters in their own offices. They are the slaves of newspapers, individuals, and syndicates, the members of which are often ignorant, shallow, and narrow-minded. The unfortunate, hard-working journalists have to write as they are told, and flatter the prejudices and passions of their readers. They are also irresponsible, and after they have fomented enmities, flattered vested interests, and written laudatory notices for dubious advertisers, no one can bring them to book. Personally unknown, merged in the identity of a journal, shifting from Tory to Labour or Liberal papers, they are nothing to the world but a source of mischief and tergiversation.

“A drop of ink,” said Byron, “may make millions think.” To-day the great newspapers are nothing but commercial speculations. “The glorious free press” of Britain is one of the greatest impositions of the age. It exists to pervert and corrupt the public mind, as far as possible, in favour of certain financial interests which are never openly stated. It is the obedient, humble, maid-of-all-work of the advertisers, from quack remedies to world-wide syndicates. The only really free press in this country consists of a few journals founded and maintained for the promotion and defence of principles. They have relatively small circulations, they derive only a little of their revenue from advertisements, and that they continue to live at all is a rare tribute to the animating power of conviction, and the real talents of their editors. Journals of this kind have many difficulties of publication. They are starved by the neglect of advertisers, and they are subjected to a boycott which prevents them finding their way to more than a fraction of their potential purchasers. They are perpetually between the proverbial devil and the deep sea, and their very existence at all is a more marvel-

* *Religion and Sex*, pp. 282-3.

lous miracle than any related in all the sacred books of the world.

As an example of the difficulties of conducting advanced publications, it is no secret that over nine thousand pounds was spent on *Justice* during twenty years, and it fell on evil days at last. The arresting personality of H. M. Hyndman could not make the paper a commercial success. The *Clarion* had a much larger circulation than *Justice*, but even Mr. Robert Blatchford's great gifts and deserved popularity, could not make his paper pay without subsidies from his readers. Stewart Ross, a poet and writer of distinction, had a heart-rending struggle in conducting the *Agnostic Journal*, and it failed at his death. If three such men, of proved ability, cannot make such papers a financial success, how is the thing to be done at all?

Freethought in this country is represented in the popular press by the *Freethinker*. And a wider circulation for this journal is the best antidote to the conspiracy of silence and wilful misrepresentation of the commercial (and sensational) press. Let each reader obtain a fresh subscriber to this paper. It will assist our editor's convalescence, and contribute towards the final triumph of, what George Meredith finely called, "the best of causes."

MIMNERMUS.

Things Worth Knowing*

XLIV.

THE SUBCONSCIOUS AND THE UNCONSCIOUS

IN the history of psychology the words "subconscious" and "unconscious" have been used in a variety of meanings, and in the hands of different authors they denote concepts which are radically different from one another. Owing to this fact the many disputes waged concerning the validity of the concepts in question have frequently been characterized by a remarkable confusion of thought, and it is imperative that these various meanings should be carefully distinguished and collated if we are to arrive at any clear understanding of the aims and achievements of the authors who employ them.

. . . By Stout and others the term "subconscious" is used to denote those marginal portions of the field of consciousness which are not at the moment in the focus of attention, and is practically equivalent to "dimly conscious." "Unconscious" frequently indicates, notably in common parlance, a mere absence of consciousness, such as is applicable to sticks and stones or to states of coma occurring in a normally conscious being. These meanings of "subconscious" and "unconscious" have no relation whatever to the special concepts for which the words are now commonly employed in modern psychology, and except for the fact that they are occasionally responsible for an unpardonable confusion in discussion, they would not call for mention here.

The modern concepts of "subconscious" and "unconscious" are best illustrated by the use of the first in the work of Janet, and of the second in the work of Freud.

. . . The subconscious of Janet denotes psychical processes which have all the characters of normal conscious processes except that of integration with the main stream of consciousness, that is to say it

* Under this heading we purpose printing, weekly, a series of definite statements, taken from authoritative works, on specific subjects. They will supply instructive comments on aspects of special subjects, and will be useful, not merely in themselves, but also as a guide to works that are worth closer study.

differs from the personally conscious only in the circumstance that it has been subjected to dissociation. It is applied therefore to such phenomena as automatic writing, and to the mental processes presumed to be involved in hysterical dissociations such as anæsthesias and amnesias. The existence of subconscious processes is demonstrated by simple observation, and based upon precisely the same grounds as those which satisfy us of the existence of conscious processes in general.

The unconscious of Freud denotes a region of the mind which is assumed to exist behind the façade, as it were, of consciousness. The processes taking place therein have characters essentially different from those possessed by the processes which occur in consciousness, and behave according to essentially different laws. They cannot enter consciousness directly, but they are nevertheless able to influence consciousness, and the processes discernible on the stage of consciousness may be said indeed to be largely a resultant of the interacting forces existing in the unconscious area behind the scenes. . . .

The distinction and relationship between Janet's "subconscious" and Freud's "unconscious" will become immediately apparent if consideration is given to their respective positions in the method of science. We have seen that this method comprises three steps, the observation and recording of phenomena, the classification of the phenomena observed, and finally the finding of formulæ or laws which will serve to resume or "explain" those phenomena. This third step may involve the assumption of hypothetical entities which have no demonstrable phenomenal existence. These are not observed phenomena but conceptual abstractions, which are constructed in order to explain the observed phenomena, and are valid scientific weapons just because they fulfil this function. As an example of such hypothetical entities we may cite the ether and its waves.

Now the subconsciousness of Janet refers to processes which are *phenomenal*, and their existence is established by simple observation. In a demonstration of automatic writing, for example, we converse with a patient whose hand at the same time writes of matters which are unknown to his personal consciousness.

. . . The unconscious of Freud is a conception of an altogether different kind. Here we are no longer on the phenomenal plane, we have moved to the conceptual. Unconscious processes are not phenomenal facts, they are concepts, constructions devised to explain certain phenomena; they have not been found, they have been made. The implicit assumptions underlying Freud's doctrine may be expressed in this way. Certain entities are imagined which may be described as unconscious psychical factors; certain properties are attached to these factors, and they are conceived to act and interact according to certain laws. If it is found that the results deduced from these formulæ correspond to the phenomena actually observed in our experience, and that the correspondence is maintained in all the tests and experiments which can be devised, the formulæ may be justifiably incorporated into valid scientific theory.

This train of thought is the analogue of that underlying all the great conceptual constructions of physics and chemistry—the atomic theory and the theory of ether and its waves. Here, as in these other instances, its validity must be determined by its ability to satisfy the tests of experiment and experience demanded by the method of science. It is clear, however, that these tests are of a totally different character from those required to establish the facts comprised in Janet's description of the subconscious.

The latter are phenomena whose occurrence must be recorded by simple observation, the former are not phenomena at all, but conceptual abstractions whose only justification must be that they enable us to resume and comprehend the phenomena which experience presents to us. Unless this essential description is clearly grasped, no adequate appraisal of the contributions of Janet and Freud . . . is possible, and the failure to appreciate it is responsible for much of the irrelevant criticism which is still frequently to be heard in discussions on these subjects.

Psychopathology, its Development and its Place in Medicine,
by BERNARD HART, M.D., pp. 57-62.

Executive's Annual Report

READ BY THE PRESIDENT

IN view of existing circumstances it may be well to emphasize two things in connexion with the National Secular Society. Ever since its foundation 70 years ago this Society has stood for two things. First it has attempted to prove the untruth of religious beliefs and the injurious and unjust nature of religious privileges. All over the world, and whether the predominant religion be Christian or other, religion stands as more or less effectively barring the way to the steady and orderly development of mankind. Even in this country there is not a movement of reform, whether concerned with militarism, education, the family, or the land, where the obstructive influence of religious interests is not observable. To the creators and leaders of the movement of popular Freethought it has always been perfectly clear that the first step towards effective reform was the weakening of religious influence. And the ultimate aim of the Secular movement has been the lifting of social life to an increasingly higher level.

But in working towards this end the N.S.S. has never lost sight of another principle. This is that the continued development of society is impossible without the existence of free thought, free speech and freedom of publication. Whatever advantages may be conferred upon society by a temporary or partial suspension of these things is fully compensated by the creation of a docile public opinion that brings its own nemesis. Dictatorships, whether they be benevolent or malevolent, sooner or later break down, and then often give way to a worse state of things than existed before their establishment. A democracy, whatever be its faults, yet carries within it the seeds of its own regeneration. A dictatorship inevitably carries the conditions of its own dissolution.

But optimism with regard to the ultimate prevalence of first principles is not inconsistent with pessimism with regard to immediate circumstances; and there is neither wisdom nor utility in ignoring the fact that in every country in the civilized world freedom of thought, which little more than fifty years ago was regarded as something which once being possessed would never be discarded, is now very seriously threatened, and in many places no longer exists. In some of the chief European countries Freethought is openly prohibited and its advocates treated as the worst of criminals. And it is significant that this is being done in order to make secure a special social and political tyranny.

Even in this country the forces of reaction are finding many champions. We are not referring to Fascism, which openly lauds the gangsterism and more than medieval brutality of Hitler and Mussolini, but

to the inroads that are being made on that liberty which our ancestors purchased at so great a price. We have a film censorship and a broadcasting censorship which are being almost openly used to suppress certain opinions and to advertise others. There is a new Sunday Trading Act, which is a tribute to the strength of Puritanical Sabbatarianism. In many instances the conduct of the police with regard to public meeting is almost openly determined by the character of the opinions that are being advocated, and when no charge against the speakers is possible. The manner in which this is done awakens the suspicion that orders so to act come from above. And in addition to the boycott of unpopular opinions in the general press, feelers have been thrown out by prominent politicians as to the advisability of passing a press law which will serve as a threat to those who express undesirable criticisms. It is certain that in the event of war these hints would become actualities; and once imposed they would not be removed so easily as some were removed after 1918.

Nor ought there to be any mistake about one other thing. Whatever move is made in the direction of restricting intellectual freedom, the Freethought movement will be the first to suffer. Whenever a serious attempt is made to destroy independence of opinion, the Freethought movement is at once marked out for slaughter. This is a compliment that the enemies in this country have always paid us, and it is to the credit of the National Secular Society that the compliment has always been deserved.

Turning to the special activities of this Society, it is satisfactory to be able to report that the level of work has been well maintained during the past year, and with a reasonable measure of success. The number of new members admitted has risen, and the income is a little larger than last year. But there is still a very big gap between income and expenditure, and it is hoped that this gap will be lessened, so as to leave more in hand for special purposes and unexpected calls. On this point the reminder may again be issued that the balance-sheet placed before the Conference refers to the income and expenditure of the Executive only. Each Branch has its own income and its own expenditure, which are not included in the report now presented.

During the period covered by this report the Executive has been directly responsible—financially and otherwise—for 542 meetings. While these meetings have met with a gratifying measure of success, it is quite impossible to conduct such meetings without incurring considerable monetary loss. Fortunately the reserve funds of the Society are, at present, equal to the demand.

New Branches of the Society have been opened at Preston, Edinburgh, Hetton le Hole and Leeds. Application has also been received for the formation of a Branch of the Society at Accra, West Africa. This will be granted in due course, and it is to be hoped that Signor Mussolini will raise no objections to this being done.

What has been said of the financial statement applies also to lectures. The figures given apply only to those arranged by the Executive. But each Branch carries out its own lecturing programme, and if the total were given the figure would be a very large one. A great many of these meetings are in the open air, and it is not easy to estimate the value of these. Like so many other advanced movements Freethought owes much to the devotion of its open-air contingent, who do a very laborious work with the minimum of publicity and pay.

Of the Branches new and old, it may be said that Edinburgh promises well. The members are full of

enthusiasm, and its sales of literature, always a healthy sign, are good. Glasgow has carried on its usual campaign, indoors and outdoors, and reports good audiences. It is a pity that propaganda in other parts of Scotland is being left to individual enterprise. It is to be hoped that this will be remedied in the coming year. On Tyneside considerable headway is being made. A band of willing and competent speakers, with Mr. J. T. Brighton as lecturer-in-chief, are doing excellent work in Durham and Northumberland, and Mr. Brighton is building up an excellent reputation both as lecturer and debater. There is a rich field in these two counties if it is properly worked. Mr. Clayton, working in Lancashire, also reports many successful meetings, and although he sometimes meets with noisy opposition, and official interference, tact and good humour do much to overcome both. Mr. Whitehead continues his open-air propaganda—by special arrangements with the Executive—and reports good campaigns in many parts of the country. The Liverpool and Manchester Branches continue their work with marked success, although both could do much more if local Freethinkers would give a larger measure of moral and financial support. The field in both places is a very large one, and if more is to be done more workers and supporters are required. What has just been said applies also to Plymouth. A quiet and steady propaganda is there being carried on, but more local help is urgently needed.

In London the work goes on as usual. A very large number of lectures are delivered in the parks and open spaces, and a large audience is the general rule. The North London Branch carries on open-air meetings all the year round at Hampstead, with Mr. Ebury as the principal speaker, and although he has had to complain of occasional attempts on the part of the police to interfere with his meetings, firmness and tact have prevented actual interruption of meetings. South London, West Ham and West London Branches all carry on both indoor and outdoor meetings, and they with the Bethnal Green Branch have enlarged their spheres of operations with satisfactory results. A number of "Socials" held by the West Ham and West London Branches have resulted in the making of many new friends, and have established a warmer contact between old ones.

The illness of your President in January cut short his winter lecturing, and although still under medical supervision, he hopes to resume lecturing in the autumn, even though for the coming winter his platform work may be a little curtailed. It is the first time in his long connexion with the Freethought movement that he has been guilty of ill-health, and it is to be hoped that he will not again offend.

During the past year the trustees of the Society have to acknowledge a donation of £50 from A. W., and under the will of the late Caroline Neate the ground rents of two houses, which represent a capitalized value of about £600.

Among the deaths of the year we may place on record that of Mrs. Bradlaugh-Bonner, the only surviving child of the founder of this Society, Charles Bradlaugh. She had been in bad health for some time, and for some years had been prevented from doing platform work owing to an affection of the throat. But her pen was busy, and her interest in Freethought strong. She was a woman of marked ability and balanced judgment, and on Committee work her advice and co-operation were highly valued.

Mr. J. G. Dobson was another of the "old guard" who has passed from our midst. A Tynesider of indomitable conviction, he never missed an opportunity of serving the Cause he loved. His death was followed by that of his daughter, Sarah, a woman

who followed her father in his opinions and in readiness to do what she could for the advancement of Freethought. Captain John Latham was another very gallant Freethinker, who for some years had been resident in South Africa. But his association with the N.S.S. was never broken, and his devotion to the movement was deep and sustained. Mrs. Crompton, of Manchester, a very firm friend of the local Branch, was another very loyal member of the N.S.S. She and her late husband were very familiar figures at all meetings, quiet and unassuming in nature, but always ready to help in any way within their power. Finally, the death of G. F. H. McCluskey, of Plymouth, breaks another link with the earlier history of our movement. Mr. McCluskey was well known in his "home town," and filled several local public offices. His association with the Society dated back to the 'eighties, and he was one of the Society's Trustees until his death. To these and to others who have joined the great army of the dead, and whose influence will manifest itself in the better life of the people, the Executive, on behalf of the Society, offers its tribute of respect.

One of the resolutions before the Conference offers congratulations to the Editor of the *Freethinker* on the completion of his 21 years control of that journal. The Executive feels that this is a fitting occasion on which to express the appreciation of the Conference for what is now the oldest Freethought journal in Europe. Its service to the Society and to Freethought in general has been very great. On all occasions and in all circumstances, it has never hesitated to say what it was considered necessary to say, and it is a testimony to the appreciation felt for this policy that no other Freethought paper has endeared itself so much to the Freethinkers of this country, or has created so great a feeling of friendly intimacy. The maintenance of a Freethought paper over so long a period, involves an amount of hard work and unselfish devotion not easily over-estimated.

The Executive continues its co-operation with the Secular Education League, the Society for the Abolition of the Blasphemy Laws, the Society for the Abolition of Capital Punishment, the National Peace Council, and the League of Nations Union. A wish was expressed that your President should represent the N.S.S. at the International Congress at Prague, but that was not possible, and he delegated that duty to Mr. Bayard Simmons. In these days when so much Continental Freethought is under a cloud, it is pleasing to be able to state that the Congress was well attended, and full of hope for the future. Some important steps were taken, some of which appear to foreshadow the adoption of a definitely economic and political programme as part of the policy of the International. It is to be hoped that the final stage will not be such as to prevent the N.S.S. acting in full membership with the International. This Society has been connected with the International ever since its inception, and it would be regrettable if after all these years our association with it was reduced to a merely sympathetic attitude, with co-operation only on special occasions and for special purposes. But the attitude of the N.S.S. with regard to political programmes is well known, and we could not maintain one attitude at home and another abroad.

A Bill for the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws has been introduced into the House of Commons by Mr. Thurtle, M.P. Whether it will reach the stage of a second reading depends upon parliamentary accidents, but Freethinkers all over the country can do some useful propagandist work by questioning their Members of Parliament and raising the question in local debating societies and in the press. A great

(Continued on page 362)

Acid Drops

Amidst its trail of poison gas which has blinded, apart from the native soldiers, thousands of women and children in Abyssinia, Italy now proposes to erect a large statue of Jesus. The *Church Times* thinks this is "dreadfully blasphemous," but why more so than the thousands of crucifixes Protestants and Catholics carried about when regaled by the spectacle of burning heretics. In the foul religious wars waged by Christians, only 200 or 300 years ago, the cross of Christ was evident everywhere; and the more the pillage, raping, murders, torture, and other atrocities, the more the religion with its priests and its crucifixes. Italy is just as Christian now as she, in company with the other great European powers, was then.

What has changed is the *Secular* spirit. The tremendous advance of humanism, as religion has declined during the past century, has roused the conscience of men and women. The wanton invasion of a "savage" country, bringing with it all the diabolical horrors modern science has invented, is rightly denounced. But it is not, and never was, religion which has denounced these and similar horrors. It is humanism as taught by the great progressive thinkers which is responsible for the change—the secular spirit, or secularism, the doctrine that, as this is the only world we know anything about, so let us make the most of it, and not of the imaginary heaven of priests. Our job is to foster that spirit more and more.

How hopelessly confused is the modern "progressive" Christian, can be seen in the case of the Rev. Leslie Weatherhead. In the *Christian World* he recently stated, "To my mind, we do not know yet what Christianity really is, for we have never adequately seen it in the perspective of the truth other religions undoubtedly reveal. The Christianity we know now cannot be the final religion for the world. The final religion for the world will be a Christianity which includes the truth of every religion." What a delightful confession from a Christian parson! So it seems that after all the millions of books published on Christianity and the hundreds of millions of sermons spoken on its behalf, we don't know, after all, what "Christianity really is." We don't know how much truth there is in other religions, that of the African pygmy, for example. And Christianity is actually not God's final religion to man!

Let us undeceive Mr. Weatherhead. We do know exactly what Christianity and the other religions are. We know them almost inside out. We know their origins and history. We know they are founded upon ignorance, stupidity and fear. We know that they have done incalculable harm to the world, and we know, thank heaven, that their capacity for harm is slowly but surely dying. And we are doing our best to hasten that process.

That the Christian world is beginning to sit up and notice how little religion is liked, in spite of its big words, can be seen in the leading article in a religious journal which says, among other damning admissions: "Let us face the facts. The Church of England is confronted with a dominant though tepid anti-clericalism . . . the truth is that a large proportion of educated Englishmen, more particularly in the governing classes, have lost all interest in institutional religion. . . . They derive entire satisfaction from a form of Christianity without a church . . ." and so on. We hope the Christian world will face the facts. But when they have done so, what are they going to do about it? Is it not too late, these days, to prate about "Christ as God Incarnate, a unique figure in the history of man"? What use now can be silly statements like "Christ has no peer, and Christianity has no rival"? Will not the Church face the fact that she is losing all round, gradually breaking up and never winning even a single victory?

"Man," said the Bishop of Bradford recently, "has always feared God." This is not quite right. "God," as taught by Christians, is certainly an object to be feared by men who believed in Christianity. People who did not believe in religion, however, mostly found "God" a bore, and nothing whatever to be frightened at. What is there to fear about "God"? Hell?

Professor Dibelius of Heidelberg has just published *A Fresh Approach to the New Testament*. A fresh approach is undoubtedly needed; most of the other approaches have either been worked to death or have been found leading, in the ultimate, to genuine disbelief. What we ask for is a new approach to show that all the miracles of the New Testament took place, that Jesus was born of a virgin, with God as his father, and that after being dead for three days, he rose again. Any approach that does not *prove* these things is surely no better than the old one. The only justification for something new is that it produces *evidence*. Has Dibelius produced anything but mere words?

An "exposure" of the extraordinary "principles" of William Randolph Hearst, sometimes called the North-cliffe of America, appears in the *Modern Monthly*, a "left" review of New York. The heading is "Public Menace No. 1." We have no direct knowledge of Mr. Hearst's strange personality beyond its public expression as that of an unmitigated "jingo." But if one tenth of the "M.M." indictment is true Mr. Hearst deserves the headline allotted him. We note that one of Hearst's friends praises his "ideals of patriotism and reverence." Well, we too have our British Public Menaces, and most, if not all of them, are noted for their "reverence"!

Pastor Russell's successor, "Judge" Rutherford, boasts that his Church (under various aliases) has 50,000 members. It is called (in 83 countries) "Jehovah's Witnesses." In U.S.A. its name is "Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society." In England, we know it as the "International Bible Students' Association." In New York there are 196 so-called "witnesses" on the pay-roll, to say nothing of Judge Rutherford's own remuneration, unspecified. Probably, like the Bishop of London's "Oxford House" engagement, Rutherford works "for nothing." According to the *Literary Digest*, this Church believes in "fundamentalism with a dab of first century eschatology." It teaches that the Kingdom of Heaven is now here, having been established in the rather likely date of 1914. But "Armageddon is now imminent and the wrath of God is upon Christendom . . . especially the arrogant Anglo-American Seventh Empire." God help us.

Dr. Archibald Alexander, in a sermon a few days ago, tried to explain how it came about that "it was nothing else but the teaching and spirit of Jesus that has outlawed slavery," although nobody can pretend that the teaching of Jesus ever referred to slavery adversely. As to the "spirit," this only means that as Dr. Alexander lives in a day when most people abhor slavery he too opposes it. There would be more wisdom in his repudiating Moses and the Bible which enshrines the teaching of Moses, who directly, and in so many words deliberately countenanced slavery and coded the law which says "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." Witches were burnt alive because Christians believed in the Bible. Slavery and war are still existent amongst very Christian nations. It is a queer sort of "Progressive Revelation" which makes God a slave-dealer in one country and an abolitionist in another at the same period, and sometimes in different parts of the same Christian Empire.

In his Presidential Address to the Adult School Union, Mr. Joiner spoke from personal experience of his boyhood. He was unfortunate enough to be left destitute at the age of eight, and became a "ward" of the parish—whose responsibilities were acknowledged (and discharged in full) by their contributing eighteen pence

and a loaf of bread once a week on condition that he attended church every Sunday, and that threepence a week went back to the authorities for the child's "education." Such was Christian "charity" in days when squire and parson ruled the parish.

Military Germany was, before the war, profoundly religious. This can be seen in the way she fought the blacks in West Africa. When Germany started to conquer the Herreros, they numbered 85,000. When the conquerors had done, the Herreros numbered 15,000. General von Notha, to ensure there never would be another "rebellion" against the Germans, issued the order to kill *all* prisoners. Dr. Karl Peters, the conqueror of German West Africa, "was tried for his maladministration, plunder, burning villages, flogging and chaining of women and children, forced concubinage and murder, and was found guilty on all counts." So was Herr von Puttkamer, Governor of the Cameroons. We do not doubt that these two gentlemen were thoroughly religious.

Although Mr. John J. Costello is religious and has reached the age of 101, it is quite a pleasure to record that he does not attribute his longevity to his devotion to Jesus and Mary, or to his abstention from beer, pork, and tobacco. He simply can give no reason why he has reached such an advanced age. We congratulate him on his honesty.

A recent issue of the *Daily Telegraph* published (for payment, we assume) the text "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." The waggish advertisement editor placed immediately below this text an advertisement which began with the words (in large type): WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT!

The Rev. H. G. Mulliner of Ripon writes about "The Church and the Village." He most admirably aims at helping the rural councils to make best possible use of its opportunities for creating fellowship where it is badly needed. He takes unusually optimistic views of the possibilities, and he contrasts the newer democratic spirit in the "communal village" with the old "hierarchical" village where squire and parson ruled. But Mr. Mulliner cannot realize the undoubted fact that whatever progress has been and will be, is independent of superhuman direction. "Man is not man," says Mr. Mulliner, "until he is in communion with God, and to build social life on practical Atheism is to build it on delusion." Mr. Mulliner is—we are sure—a genuine reformer, but sentiments of this intolerant character are the ordinary inanities of Christian blind self-conceit.

A pamphlet called *The Church, Marriage and Divorce*, published on behalf of the Church Union, Church Literature Association, 1936 (p. 11) commits itself to the lunatic opinion that "A husband can no more cease to be the husband of his wife, than a father can cease to be the father of his children." Opposition to a humane and rational divorce on such grounds is as irrelevant as a belief that the moon is made of green cheese.

Aldous Huxley has written a Pacifist pamphlet called: *The Case for Constructive Peace*. Much of it is worthy the author at his best: a well-argued humanitarian statement of the case for non-violent resistance to war. With his opposition to war we are in hearty agreement, even if—as our pamphlet, *Humanity and War*, shows—our method of reaching the same ends differ. We see nothing against Mr. Huxley, not a Christian we believe, devoting space to an appeal to Christians. They need it. But is it reasonable to say that although "the Church does not condemn war, Jesus did"? We will not pause to ask Mr. Huxley to name the war which Jesus condemned. After two thousand years in which Christians have quoted the authority of Jesus in favour of war—and, as Mr. Huxley admits, they are still doing so—it seems scarcely decent for an outsider to inform the Church "What Jesus Meant."

American clericalism seems to bear evidences of the same sort of invertebrate "progressivism" as we see in the semi-labourism of a few irresponsible "firebrands" like Dr. Soper and the Industrial Christianity of the Rev. R. T. Kirk. This is what the *American Freeman* says about them:—

After countless centuries of being one of the arms of reaction, the Church, faced with half-empty buildings and dwindling financial returns, is permitting a minority of its spokesmen to make gestures in the direction of radicalism, but the thing stinks to heaven. In January, 1935, Yale University sent a questionnaire to 100,000 clergymen, chiefly Protestants, of 22 major faiths and denominations. Replies were received from 4,700. The vote shows that only 25 per cent were in favour of permitting "labour leaders as speakers to congregations," only 47.5 per cent favoured the "right of labour to strike and picket," only 29.6 per cent favoured "unionization of workers," and only 66.4 per cent voted in favour of "fair play for Negroes."

The Bible Marches On, we are told by an advertisement of the British and Foreign Bible Society. All this means is that sufficient cash is in their lockers to enable the machines to print and reprint Bibles. That this cash exists, where the fool-crop is perennial, is not surprising. *Circulation*, particularly when it includes giving away to people who don't want them, is easy. Napoleon said that an army marches on its stomach, in other words, the success of the military machine ultimately depends upon the commissariat. Bible circulating is precisely in the same position. So the British and Foreign Bible Society once more appeals for funds.

We must note again, on the excellent authority of the *Universe*, that "It is now, and always has been the mind of the Church, that unbaptized infants go to Hell, and suffer the principal 'pain of Hell,' which is the loss of the beatific visions," and that "Our Lord" himself laid down "that unless one be born of water and of the Holy Ghost, one cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven." This settles three things—first, that there is a Hell, second, that unbaptized infants go there, and third, that they remain in Hell for eternity. Whether they are frizzling in the heat all the time is a point about which theologians, we are told, are permitted to hold various opinions. Otherwise, anybody who denies these statements, is a blatant blasphemer, and is sure to go to Hell himself and possibly frizzle for ever and ever.

It is difficult to get exact figures of Roman Catholics in this country, but in the United States of America they are given as just under 21 millions. The increase last year was 212,136, including 63,454 converts. It is not surprising, therefore, that such numbers wield immense influence, with pen and speech, and, not only through their own journals, but through the journals on the staffs of which are Roman Catholics. It may be true that science is undermining religion, but Roman Catholicism is a huge organization, immensely rich, and wonderfully distributed all over the world. The forces of Freethought are thus heavily weighted in their encounter with this reactionary body—though truth is bound, as always, to win in the end.

Pilgrimages are beginning to be made to Lourdes, and Archbishop Hinsley has been with 800 pilgrims—which include, by the way, 17 stretcher and 41 carrying cases. It should prove interesting to see how many of these poor invalids will return cured. As a rule, "Our Lady" is hard-hearted enough to cure none at all; and anyone interested in the "classic" cures at Lourdes, will find most of them happened years before the war when the evidence was about equal to that produced, as a rule, in favour of other miracles. There is no more fraudulent money-making concern in the world than Lourdes; and when any bishop or other "higher" priest falls ill on the way to or actually in Lourdes, he is immediately whisked back to a nursing home or hospital, where he can get the best medical attendance. No "Our Lady" for him!

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTÉ

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

T. H. PERKINS.—“Quondam” will contribute special articles from time to time. He notes your appreciation of his writings. It is good to read your commendation of those Freethinkers who have worked so hard for the benefit of their fellows.

G. MARTIN.—Thanks for introducing the *Freethinker* to new readers. That is the kind of help we value very highly. If we could secure a thousand new readers during the next six months it would relieve our mind of many anxieties.

S. H. ABRAHAM.—Thanks. Shall appear. Will look into the other matter.

R. GERRARD.—Papers are sent to the addresses given. We are obliged for your help. We are flattered to learn that our writings have helped you to “a deeper and fuller understanding of life.” It is very largely a task of clearing away misunderstandings and confusions.

C. S. SMITH (Christchurch N.Z.).—Thanks for good wishes. Mr. Cohen is getting better, but he is not at present able to take the prolonged rest he ought to take. He hopes to be quite well by the autumn.

FOR Advertising and Circulating the *Freethinker*.—N. Finney, 308.

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

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

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

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.

The “*Freethinker*” will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—

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

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

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

Sugar Plums

The 1936 Annual Conference held on Sunday last at Anderton's Hotel, Fleet Street, has to be added to the run of successful Conferences that have been held of recent years. The attendance was rather above average, and there was an air of brightness and good humour about the whole of the proceedings. It was only to be expected that, after his late serious illness, the President would receive a welcome that was more than a warm one, it bordered on the affectionate and Mr. Cohen obviously felt it once or twice. It was also good to see the familiar faces of the older members, along with a very good sprinkling of young ones—both sets equally eager and interested in the common cause. One felt reassured as to the future of Freethought in this country.

On Saturday evening the Social at Anderton's was also even more successful than usual. The large room was filled, and the sexes were about equal in numbers. Mr. Walter Newman was a pronounced success in his humorous songs and characterizations, and his “turn” as the Colonel who was called on to make a speech in the absence of the Parliamentary candidate was excru-

ciatingly funny, particularly as he was quite as intelligible as a well-known and prominent political character. Miss Kathleen Sothcott was attractive in her singing with a perfect enunciation that added charm to her songs. Mr. Dowson presided at the piano and sang acceptably. The President offered a few words of welcome to all present, and everyone left quite happy, well prepared for the more serious work of the Conference itself.

We have space for but a brief notice of the Evening Demonstration. A fuller account will appear next week. Whit-Sunday is one of the worst days in the year on which to hold a public meeting, and it was pleasing to find the hall quite filled by the time the Chairman and the rest of the speakers came on the platform. Then for two solid hours the audience listened with evident interest and pleasure to speeches from Messrs. Bedborough, Ebury, Flanders, Rosetti, Saphin, Brighton and Clayton, with a closing speech from the President. The interest in the speeches was very marked, and the sales of the *Freethinker* and other literature gave testimony to their effect on many who were new to this kind of propaganda. Special thanks are due to the stewards—ladies and gentlemen—who worked with a will in attending to the sale of literature and other matters. They were rewarded by the success of the meeting.

A correspondent has obliged us with the following extract from the *Lincolnshire Free Press*:—

The gipsy's curse, the evil eye, and the witch's influence were mentioned in a case at Cambridge Assizes on Saturday, when Rosanna Price, a caravan-dweller and pedlar, was convicted of demanding money and goods with menaces from Percy Bradshaw, a grocer, of March, Cambridgeshire, and bound over for 12 months.

Mr. Bradshaw said that he believed in the witch's curse. He had known Price for about 12 months, and during that time he had given her £50 because of his fear of the curse.

Just in the same way does the Church of Christ claim the keys of Heaven and Hell and dangle timid and believing souls over the Bottomless Pit. The handsome donation then materializes.

We congratulate the *Modern Churchman* on its admirable exposure of the preposterous claims of Teresa Helena Higginson—an Irish peasant woman who died a few years ago. In any humane, decent community Teresa would have been relegated to a mental hospital. The Jesuit Order got hold of the poor demented creature and exploited her claims to “miracle-working” with the same zeal that Catholics have held to the truth of similar miracle-working by “Saints” of all the Christian ages. The Catholic Truth Society issues with the *Imprimatur* of the Archbishop of Dublin, a twopenny pamphlet proclaiming the “facts.” They “prove” that Teresa went without food for years, God covering up all evidence to the contrary by sending an angel from heaven exactly resembling Teresa physically and taking Teresa's place at the dinner table and eating up her food. It is similarly vouched for that Teresa married Jesus Christ who thereupon marked Teresa's body with five stigmata—agreeing in every respect with the wounds on Christ's own body. Mr. J. C. Hardwick, M.A., in quoting the C.T.S. booklet adds: “It is clear that this woman was a pathological case, the victim of hallucinations. Persons of this ‘mythomaniacal’ constitution are characterized by credulity, exhibitionism, and a tendency towards deceit.”

Mr. G. Whitehead is holding some very successful meetings in the North Eastern Area, in co-operation with the Federation of Branches of the N.S.S. He will remain in the district for another fortnight, and details will be found each week in the Lecture Notice Column. Pioneer Press literature is obtainable at all meetings, and officials present will give particulars of membership to intending members.

(Continued from page 358)

deal of ignorance on this subject exists, with both the general public and with Members of Parliament. And publicity opens a good road for enlightenment. So long as the Blasphemy Laws remain on the statute books, the threat is not merely to discussions on religion, but in a season of panic or marked reaction these laws could easily be extended to many topics beside religious discussions.

It has been so often said in these reports that we must look forward to a testing time for individual Freethinkers and for the Freethought movement, that to repeat it again sounds like the telling of an oft-told tale. And yet the outlook to-day is more menacing than it has yet been. The triumphs of reaction, and the return to a barbaric medievalism abroad have not been without influence in this country. Some indications of this have already been touched on, and they are sufficiently serious to command earnest and even anxious attention. Much has been said about the necessity of forming a "united front" to meet the common enemy. The National Secular Society has always welcomed a united front on any question on which it can enter into co-operation with others. The combinations that have been formed over and over again to promote such reforms as the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws, the abolition of religious teaching in State-supported schools, and the general committees that have been formed, at our instigation, to defeat attempts to curtail freedom of propaganda, are examples of this. We welcome help from all quarters, and are ready to co-operate with any person or organization on which a common ground can be stated and adhered to. But to make the condition of co-operation with us the adoption of policies and programmes outside the scope of the Society's stated aims, is to curtail the influence we have wielded and still wield. We do not add to our power by sinking our identity in that of other parties or policies, we weaken it; and at a time when more than ever there is the need for a strong party that will fight for genuine and uncompromising Freethought, is almost suicidal.

The need for this to-day is greater than it ever has been. The creation of corresponding members has helped to make plainer the already known fact that in every town in the country there are to be found Freethinkers who are unattached to any organization, and are doing little or nothing to help us in the fight, or to guard themselves against attack. These people should be sought out whenever possible and induced to lend a helping hand at the work. Branches of the Society should be formed wherever possible, or, if it is not possible to form a Branch, individuals should be induced to join headquarters and so keep themselves in touch with us and our work. There may be dark days ahead, and we must prepare for eventualities. We need not despair of ultimate triumph; what we have to do is so to work as to bring our day of victory nearer. Perhaps that is a too literal way of describing the situation. For after all, progress is not an end but a becoming. Every forward step should be used to go still further. Every advance opens up new possibilities and secures new conquests. It is in the lifting of life to a successively higher level that the Freethought ideal is best expressed, and it is in promoting this that the work of the National Secular Society consists.

There was the strangest combination of church influence against me. It was concluded that no Christian ought to vote for me, because I belonged to no church.

Lincoln.

"The Fool Hath Said . . ."

THERE is evidently more joy among clerics when one literary man is converted than if a thousand butchers, bakers and grocers came to see the light. For in no other way can one explain the (almost) wholehearted approval bestowed upon Mr. Beverley Nichols' latest work, *The Fool Hath Said . . .* by both religious and lay critics. Not that this approval is given without some reservations. Most of the critics seem a little uncomfortable about Mr. Nichols' arguments; they do not feel he is quite well enough up in theology and the historical side of Biblical criticism. Still, as that side of the subject is being well supplied by our doctors of theology, the purely lay-arguments of an ordinary lay-man will just suit the class of people for whom the book is so evidently written.

Mr. Nichols is well-known as a "literary" man. By this is not meant that he has achieved greatness in literature. It simply means that he has, somehow or other, reached the public ear through his books; and, having discovered religion, Mr. Nichols is anxious that the world and his wife should follow suit. *The Fool Hath Said . . .* embodies his reasons for believing in God and Jesus and miracles and all the kind of thing in religion which we, on this side of the fence feel, if not altogether pure and unadulterated drivel, comes precious near it.

At the very outset Mr. Nichols tells us that "after all," Jesus "was by far the greatest wit the world has ever known." This does not seem particularly original. Some of us remember that Jesus has been successively acclaimed as the greatest medium, spiritualist, anarchist, socialist, poet, orator, romantic, business man, and many other professions and businesses also that the world has ever known. Having all these other qualifications, he is not made much greater by being also called the greatest wit "after all." After all, if one repeats the same kind of thing year in and year out for centuries, some people will get to believe it. And, after all, Mr. Nichols has a right to his opinion. Then he tells us about "the men of faith, the happy men with a light in their eyes and a song in their hearts." This also does not seem particularly original. Of course men of faith have a light in their eyes and a song in their hearts, but so have people who have no faith at all. This kind of thing gets us nowhere. Nor does a long disquisition on our being "polite Agnostics" and "gentlemen of disbelief" who do not pray, suddenly finding ourselves by "some queer fluke of chance" (*sic*) "falling on our knees." I cannot speak with authority about polite Agnostics, but I do know something about Atheists; and though it may hurt Mr. Nichols to be told about it, we do not grovel, as he evidently does. We leave this kind of "humility" to our converted *intelligentsia*.

And it is interesting to note that other readers of the book when it appeared serially in *Nash's* wrote a note to the Editor imploring him to ask Mr. Nichols "to make his articles a little more interesting"—with the poor Editor's reply that "perhaps you'll find him more interesting" later.

However, the brilliant—though uninteresting—author warms to his work and soon introduces us to a "Rationalist" whose capacity for asking fatuous questions to be crushingly answered is one of the features of *The Fool Hath Said . . .* He "leers" at Mr. Nichols "unsteadily clutches the stem of his cocktail glass" and asks, "But how do you explain Saint John, eh? How do you get over that little difficulty?" The fact that the author "had made an exhaustive study of the gospels," seemed to "en-

rage" the gentleman with the cocktail glass, and he proceeded to ask more (and sillier) questions. Mr. Smith (for that is his name) even went so far as to ask Mr. Nichols whether he knew "that all your gospel evidence is tainted?" He even went to the extreme pitch of scepticism by actually suggesting that "there isn't" any historical evidence at all. This tremendous indictment Mr. Nichols bravely brushed aside by declaring that there was "the sentence in Tacitus." Whereupon Mr. Smith (chuckling) said:—

"Oh that old sentence in Tacitus! The Christians are so proud of it. One little contemptuous sentence from a Roman historian. One little sneering sentence to record the birth, life, teaching, death, and resurrection of the Son of God! Otherwise—nothing. Not a whisper! Not a ripple! However, go on. Tell me your sentence."

Mr. Nichols nearly got up and walked away as he was afraid Mr. Smith "would cause a row of some sort." Instead, he "reminded" his opponent that Tacitus was writing "of a sect called Christians," and there was only the sentence, "The originator of that name, one Christus, had been executed in the reign of Tiberius, by order of the Administrator Pontius Pilate," which piece of learned information seemed to upset Mr. Smith so much that to Mr. Nichols' "great relief," the former got up, "swallowed his drink and strolled away." And that is why Mr. Nichols springs upon the unwary reader the stupendous piece of information—in italics too—that "apart from that single sentence of Tacitus, there is a complete lack of any historical testimony as to the very existence of Jesus." Of course, he was not to know that some of us, who subscribe neither to the name "Rationalist" or "polite Agnostic," have been saying the same thing for nearly two centuries at least. How can Mr. Nichols know of Dupuis, Volney or Taylor? Indeed, how can he know that even the sentence in Tacitus is by scholars suspected as a fraudulent interpolation? It requires a little more reading and a little more knowledge than the mere mugging-up of Christian text books to put the Freethought case against the Gospels. Mr. Nichols asks, What if they are genuine? And he seems to think—being a literary man—that if the gospels were actually written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, they would be genuine—that is, the miracles, the virgin birth, the resurrection all really took place. These things are written in a book and that settles it.

Mr. Nichols faces the question put by Shelley in the notes to Queen Mab—"Either the Christian religion is true, or it is false; if true, it comes from God . . . if God has spoken, why is the universe not convinced?" Mr. Nichols does not want to "dodge" the issue, and he thinks he, so to speak, settles "the hash" of the sceptic by saying that it is a good thing the Bible problem is a *real* problem. The world would be drab—or dead—if the truth about Christ was settled with "photographs of his actual presence," or "records of his voice." No, God did it in a much better way. He made faith a difficulty. Otherwise "all merit would have been taken from it. All glory and virtue." In "a world without doubt," Christ would "descend to the level of a policeman." And this, mark you; this is Mr. Nichols' "tremendous truth"—on which "quite by accident, we have stumbled."

It is difficult but, of course, quite possible, to believe that some people will immediately rush out for Jesus after being, as the French would say, "bouleversé" with such an unanswerable argument. After all, Mr. Nichols must believe he has given the sceptic unanswerable arguments. They are the *raison*

d'être of his book. And this one, that God intended faith to be difficult, is his big prop. What a prop!

But what does he say about the Virgin Birth, the Temptation, the Miracles, etc.? These things don't trouble him in the least. They can be "surmounted." And he proceeds to give "the answer as soberly as if he were giving evidence on a matter of life and death in a court of law." And first you must read the Gospels "in your most embittered and incredulous mood with a cigarette between your fingers and a whisky and soda by your side, convinced that the whole thing is a pious fraud." If you do this you will—whether you like it or not—be forced to certain "very provoking conclusions." For my own part I can only say I would come to these conclusions only after a long course of whiskies and sodas.

Mr. Nichols, briefly, claims that the gospels are written by eye-witnesses, they could not be the "scribblings of madmen" or "the words of a lunatic, cad, or cheat," which is not, of course, the Freethought case at all. And he actually cites as proof that only an eye-witness could have written that wonderful story of Jesus turning water into wine. For if it were not true why was it put in "to make the forgery more convincing?" And the poor benighted "Rationalist must answer that question before he tears up the Gospel and condemns us to death."

Believe it or not, this is the kind of—well, drivel is the right word, with which the book is filled. I could, of course, answer it point by point, but what is the use? Mr. Nichols says *somebody* must have said "Suffer the little children, etc.," and other well-known Gospel sayings. "Somebody said these things because they are staring me in the face from the Bible." And "whoever said them was *gigantic*." And if you are not now convinced, Mr. Nichols adds you should look at the stars. For he has thus proved beyond all possible doubt that the Gospels are all gospel truth.

As for miracles, they are dismissed in the same airy fashion. Perhaps I am wrong about the word "airy," for, honestly, I do feel Mr. Nichols is really rolling on the ground and shrieking "God, Jesus!" all the time like an honest-to-goodness revivalite. The truth of miracles is settled because "men inventing a miracle would scrupulously avoid mentioning any persons who might deny the miracle." If you are still unconvinced look at the way "the spade confounds the pen"—how excavations prove, every day, that the miracles in the Old Testament did take place. If the Old Testament is true how much truer is the New Testament!

I am not joking. The whole of *The Fool Hath Said . . .* is packed with this kind of "argument" delivered in a sort of hysterical key all the time, and which is believed by Mr. Nichols to answer the sceptical case. Stale old arguments, modern journalism, and almost utter ignorance of science and philosophy make up the bulk of the book.

I have no more space to deal with Mr. Nichols and his Buchman Group. There are surely some things quite too stupid to criticize, and one of them is the farrago of rubbish emanating from the silly Christian sect which even the Anglo- and Roman Catholics have so severely denounced.

Finally, one would dearly like to know how many "polite" Agnostics, comic "Rationalists" or even blatant Atheists *The Fool Hath Said . . .* has converted. Has it even converted a single man or woman who was convinced beforehand of the absurdity of miracles? Will the book be quoted or read in, let us say, five years?

H. CUTNER.

Religious Confidence Tricks

“ . . . it oft falls out,
To have what we would have, we speak not what we mean.”

PROBABLY none of what are called “the Great Religions” has ever used the art of telling lies, as has the Christian. It is true that the phrase, “The great lying Church,” was first aimed at the numerically largest section of the Christian sect. A rather wide and varied experience, however, has convinced me that the other sections of the Christians—the Orthodox, the Anglican, the Presbyterian, the Lutheran, the Amalgamated Wesleyan Methodists, etc.—are not behind the Roman Catholic in the use of falsehood.

Each has had to make some apology for its existence. Each, in turn, has tried to justify its Dictatorship—actual or attempted. In doing this, it has HAD TO LIE. Perhaps that is why Calvinist Christians have believed so strongly in Predestination! Good cause—or sufficient cause—have they to hold on, to the last, to such texts as those that tell us, “the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets.” For a “Higher Critic” to tamper with *that* would be, indeed, the sin against the Holy Ghost!

“Free-Will” Christians have had to find another line of apology. Christianity being the most adaptable of all religions, that has been fairly easy. They have lied as a result of a “Free Choice”; so they say they believe. That “choice,” however, was made and the deed was done for the Glory of God and the Profit of their Church. So, all ends well; “Being then made free from sin.” “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin”!

To a sensible man or woman the whole “business” sounds like the words and music of a Comic Opera. 'Twas not for nothing that Sullivan composed Church music as well as the music of the “Mikado.” Still, the appalling fact remains that—even now—tens of thousands of otherwise decent people are led astray by these vicious “stories” of religion. Hence the need for the activity of the *Freethinker* as a mental purifying force.

Of course, fashions in religious falsehood change just as do the fashions in women's hats or undresses. The more bare-faced lies of old are not, now, quite so common; although they can still be sometimes heard and seen. One of the much-used “Apologies” in these times can be described—quite correctly—as a sort of Religious Confidence Trick. This kind of Apologist makes a great pretence of being honest, open, fair, and frank. He admits the truth of much that Science has taught us about Religion. He abandons the “Mistakes of Moses.” Sometimes he even professes to recognize the Mistakes of Jesus Christ. He says there is a large amount that is “merely human” in the Bible. Then, having thus won the confidence of his audience, he does a mental twist and substitutes a conclusion that is as false as any of the Old, Old, Christian “Stories.”

There is one deplorable aspect to this modern form of Apology for Christianity. There are scores of Reverend Gentlemen, and one or two Reverend Ladies, who are guilty of this vicious demoralizing practice. In the ordinary matters of social life they are honest and truthful; they would scorn to lie, to deceive, or be dishonest. Yet, when it comes to trying to defend their Religion and to protect the profession by which they live; they twist, they confuse, they deceive, in a way that would put the worst Sophist of Ancient Greece to shame. And that is only one little part of the Evil that is wrought by the Christian Religion.

While dealing with Apologists for Religion, I am reminded that the Ven. V. F. Storr, M.A., is considered by many Christians to be a particularly powerful Defender of the Faith. He is a Canon and Archdeacon of Westminster. As one who is capable of “Big Magic”; he, along with another Canon, led a full musical processional prayer in Westminster for the purpose of persuading “God”—the Christian “God”—to preserve “Peace in our Time.” Verily, he *must* be “in good standing” in his Church! Not long ago, the Ven. Canon and Archdeacon Storr was the chief speaker at a Ruridecanal Conference in the Rural Deanery of Barking. His subject was “The Value of the Study of the Bible”; and the report in the local paper was headed, “Bible Justifies Faith.”

Canon Storr was reported to have said: “There was an increasing demand for instruction on how to read the Bible in the light of present-day knowledge.” “Biblical criticism was not a mushroom growth, nor was it the work of a few ‘cranks.’” There were, in the Bible “elements of myth, floating legends and traces of the natural religion which the Hebrew people once had. These things did not belong to the process of revelation at all.” “In conclusion,” he remarked, “the results of the scholars’ investigations into the New Testament have been to justify us in our faith!”

I can well imagine some local Freethinker writing a mild criticism of this to the local paper. I can—still better—imagine the Editor thereof dropping it into The Basket, with the words, “We, too, must defend the Faith.” The letter might have read in some such style as this:—

Sir,—The address by Canon Storr was very interesting. It was all the more interesting because it was so characteristic of the present-day evasive modes of apology for Christianity. “Scientific Criticism” is a much better term than “Biblical” or “Historical” criticism; because it covers the criticism from Geology, Biology, Psychology, Astronomy, Anthropology, etc., as well as from the scientific method in the study of Comparative Religion, and textual analysis of Holy Books. As hundreds of your readers differ in opinion from Canon Storr, I hope you can find space for this comment.

He admits a great deal of what has been abandoned by many sections of the Christians. This, however, cannot be understood unless we bear in mind some other facts.

First, every step in that Scientific Criticism of the Bible was bitterly—sometimes vituperatively—opposed by every section of the Christians. The “language” used by Bishops and other Apologists against Darwin, Huxley, Tyndall, Paine, Bishop Colenso, and others, is on historical record. None gave way until the force of Scientific Criticism was too strong.

Secondly, the numerically larger section of the Christians—even now—does *not* accept the results of that criticism. Nor do many other sections.

Lastly, Canon Storr's statement that, “the results of the scholars’ investigations into the New Testament have been to justify us in our faith,” would be ludicrous if it were not so pitiful.

To most Freethinkers, Religion—including the Bible—is the most interesting of all subjects; because it is a record of all the mistakes Humankind have made in their long and painful evolution. But, only a Freethinker can get the full human value out of the Bible—or any other Holy Book.

And then I awoke!

“Put not yourself into amazement how these things should be: all difficulties are but easy when they are known.”

And They Shall Recover

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN: "In the face of the wonderful cures now being effected by faith throughout England, I cannot understand how anyone can be so destitute of reason as to reject the Christian religion. These spiritual healings are undoubted proof of the existence of a benevolent Almighty, always willing to respond favourably to the appeals of true believers, provided they are made in a penitent spirit."

Sceptic: "What exactly do you mean by spiritual healings?"

O.C.: "If you will refer to Mark, Chapter 16, you will understand. Certain pious men are now carrying out regularly our Lord's injunction with, as I have said, astonishing results."

S.: "Then I am to understand that truly devout Christians suffering from any of the ills, to which flesh is heir can always be cured by special treatment by faith-healing professors?"

O.C.: "Yes."

S.: "Do you believe that any, or all, of the professors who lay their hands on their patients in the healing process will be able to speak with new tongues, and if they take poison it will not harm them? You know this promise is expressed in the chapter you quote. If you believe one part of the chapter you must, to be consistent, believe the other. Possibly, however, your credulity is not equal to the task of believing the new tongues and poison nonsense?"

O.C.: "I admit the ambiguity of the language which you term nonsense. It is, however, merely one of the many mysteries in the Scriptures which I am sure the Almighty, for some benign purpose, has decreed are to remain inscrutable."

S.: "Have you personal knowledge of invalids who were cured by this faith-healing process?"

O.C.: "Yes. I know some who had comparatively minor ailments who were cured almost instantly, and I know a woman who once had cancer, but is now in perfect health."

S.: "In the latter instance have you absolutely reliable medical testimony to the effect that she was suffering from cancer before undergoing the cure?"

O.C.: "I cannot say that I have—I am sure, however, that she was reported to have had it before her treatment."

S.: "Do you know of any case where the 'Cure' was ineffective?"

O.C.: "I admit I have heard of some."

S.: "How do you account for these failures?"

O.C.: "Obviously the patients must have been lacking in faith."

S.: "You do not apportion any of the blame to the professors?"

O.C.: "Certainly not. Their credentials cannot be challenged."

S.: "I can understand a comparatively small proportion of functional disorders being cured, ostensibly by the faith-healing or any other unusual method, in any part of the world irrespective of the prevailing religion, on much the same principle that toothache often vanishes coincident with the patient's first glimpse of the dentist's chair, but I cannot believe that firmly established organic diseases, such as, say, cancer, deafness, blindness, etc., ever respond to such treatment."

O.C.: "I assure you they do. If you will read certain newspapers you will frequently see such cures reported."

S.: "These reports are of little intrinsic value. You must remember that some newspaper proprietors with a practical knowledge of human credulity, and a desire for substantial dividends, find it profitable to regale the public with matters savouring more of sensation than veracity. There are blind clergymen in this country whose faith cannot be impugned, who would undoubtedly rejoice if their affliction were repaired. Presumably there are others minus a limb, or limbs, wishing ardently they were whole. Why do not the faith-healing professors experiment on these unfortunate individuals at, say, a public gathering? If they did so, and effected a cure, the event, by virtue of the status of

the healed, would constitute a well-authenticated miracle, the news of which would certainly spread rapidly throughout the whole of Christendom, and do far more for the renascence of its dying creeds than any number of eloquent appeals from the pulpit and elsewhere. May I tell you why they do not do so? It is because they know that no supernatural agency will restore sight to the incurably blind or replace a missing limb, although reason dictates that this class of the afflicted should, in equity, receive the same favours from a just and benevolent Almighty, as, it is alleged, he dispenses to others."

O.C.: "Then, I take it, you are not favourably impressed by the treatment?"

S.: "On the contrary, I believe this faith-healing dispensary is fraught with danger. The fact of its staff always working in the garb of sanctity tends to obscure the risk of deluding the virtuous sick, who, encouraged by false hopes, are likely to postpone undergoing proper medical treatment until it is too late. This is a serious matter, and I am surprised that the powerful Medical Union has hitherto treated it with such complaisance."

PRO REASON.

Cloven Tongues of Fire

THE Church Universal celebrates Whitsun. The Church is very far from unanimous, however "universal" it may be. It agrees that Whitsun has something to do with the "gifts" brought to True Believers on the Day of Pentecost by the Holy Ghost. But Who or What is the Holy Ghost? And if the Holy Ghost brought Christians the "gift" of "cloven tongues" to enable Russians to speak Irish, and Welsh to talk English, without previous training, why has the "Ghost" given up so desirable a miracle in days like these when internationalism is badly handicapped by the Curse of Babel?

Whitsun is just a name the English have coined to evade explanation. It is vague enough to cover anything. The Jews commemorate the invention of the Ten Commandments at the first Pentecost. Christians stole the Feast of Pentecost from the Jews, just as they annexed the Sun Day from Pagan mythology. If Whitsun celebrates anything, it is the Holy Ghost's Birthday.

If God is an Eternal Trinity—of which "the whole three Persons are co-eternal together," according to the Creed which is specially repeated in church on Whitsunday—it seems invidious to give Birthdays to two of the "Persons," and none at all to the "Father" ("there are not three Fathers," says the same Creed). Of the Three Fractions (by no means "vulgar" fractions), the "Spirit of God" seems to have been the eldest. Pentecost was by no calculation His First Appearance—although "Chaos" was the name of the first Stage. He had a hand in the Creation (according to Genesis i. 2).

The Holy Spirit appeared on earth again when Christ was being baptized by John in Jordan, and there seems to have been some kind of Holy Ghost in whose name people were baptized in still earlier days. Perhaps, however, the name Holy Ghost was common, just as there were many Jesuses and Christs. We shall never get near to information on the subject because the B.B.C. will never allow us to hear debates on controversial subjects—and the Holy Ghost is the most controversial topic the Churches ever fought about.

Dr. Adolph Harnack, in his *History of Dogma*, long ago summarized the opinions of the great theologians about this mystic "Person." He said the subject was "an accumulation of difficulties." He thought these difficulties were inherent: (1) "in the notion (of a Holy Ghost) itself, (2) in the impossibility of recognizing any specific activity of the Spirit, (3) in the desire to ascribe to the 'Logos' rather than to the 'Spirit' any active working of the universe." Harnack explains the differences of theologians thus: "By one the Holy Ghost was considered as an impersonal and therefore an unbegotten power; by another a primitive power in the history of revelation; by a third as an active power in the world

process also; others attributed to it a personal existence, misled by the expression "the Paraclete." Some, said Harnack, "regarded it as a created divine being; others as the high angel; others as the Eternal Son Himself."

Before the Mariolatry cult began there were those who professed to see in this mystical and shadowy "Person" a sort of Female God. They saw some sort of "proof" of this in the fact that this word translated "Spirit" is feminine in Hebrew. An ancient parallel was drawn between the Deaconess and the Holy Ghost, to add to the confusion. The "Wisdom" of God, with which the Holy Ghost was identified is also feminine.

The Synod of Alexandria (A.D. 362) confirmed Basil's contention that the "Ghost" was in no sense a "creature" apart from Christ. We know that in the end a bloody war eventuated which separated the Eastern Church from the Roman, on the one question: Did the Holy Ghost "proceed" from the Father only, or also from the Son? We may dismiss the dreary hair-splitting problem by quoting the current creed which St. Athanasius drew up to "clarify" the whole "truth"; "The Holy Ghost is incomprehensible," and "is of the Father and of the Son, neither made, nor created nor begotten."

It was no less an authority than Christ Himself, who promised the due arrival of the Holy Ghost "if I come not again." He (or "it," for Harnack and others use both pronouns) was to be a mixture of Jaeger Comforter, and Pelmanistic Paraclete to "bring all things to your remembrance" (John xiv. 26). But Mr. Percy Gardner derides "the thaumaturgic view that the Spirit of God rested in the hands of certain individuals." The author of "The Acts," certainly held this "thaumaturgic view" (see Acts viii. 15 et seq.). Christ's own words too were highly "thaumaturgic" when describing the wonders the Holy Ghost was to perform.

But Mr. Gardner is too good a "Modernist" to let a few words of his Master stand in the way. "It is very doubtful," he says, "whether such words were uttered by Jesus—they are scarcely in His manner"—a delightful little piece of Oxford modernism at its most precious.

The greatest miracle of Whitsuntide—recorded in Acts ii. as the "gift of tongues"—has somehow lost its old popularity. St. Paul's passing remark "Though I speak with tongues" always sounded a trifle boastfully "superior."

Cardinal Newman's defence of miracles (*Two Essays on Miracles*) went a little too far perhaps. In "proving" that "the tongue is not necessary for articulate speech," he belittled the "gift of tongues," and made the Holy Ghost's dowry superfluous. But Newman was defending Pope Gregory, who tells of the "king of the Vandals" torturing early Christians by "having their tongues cut out from the roots." But "afterwards even without tongues they spoke just as before." To show how the Holy Ghost worked in those unhistoric days we are informed that two of these tongueless talkers allowed themselves to "hold converse with abandoned women," and instantly ceased to possess the miraculous power of speech.

Bishop Gore's tedious book, *The Holy Spirit*, dismisses most summarily the Whitsun Tongue Myth. He says, "I do not think it true to say that the gift of the Spirit is associated in any exclusive sense with extraordinary gifts of tongue." The word "exclusive" seems to suggest that the Holy Ghost might have taught languages—like the ordinary Berlitz teacher, but without setting the Thames on fire about it.

A few fanatical fundamentalists still resort to Keswick and other pleasant places for Pentecostal prattle—and perhaps if anyone of commonsense understood what on earth they were talking about, it would be a miracle. Catholics offer Mass in a foreign language. Father Hampfield (*Why in Latin?*) says, "there is no use in the Mass being in English." In fact he goes so far as to say that the ordinary ignorant English Catholics "would be as earnest and warm and devout if the Mass were said in ancient Arabic or modern Chinese as if it were said in English."

But let not the Catholics claim any monopoly. Even fine elocutionists (as some few clergy are) cannot overcome the sickening thud of their intonations as they strike against the echoing vaults and reverberate unin-

telligibly through the cloistered aisles of an almost empty Abbey. The Holy Ghost of to-day has a new problem. It is useless to speak in any language to congregations who are not there.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

Correspondence

THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—I am so much in sympathy with Mr. Saphin's condemnations of the teachings of Jesus as interpreted by the Church that I am somewhat diffident about attempting to answer his letter protesting against my attributing so high a place to the teachings of Jesus. For many years I have held strong atheistical views, but this has not prevented me from appreciating either the personality of Jesus or his mutinous utterances. I would ask Mr. Saphin to reconsider almost any accidental collection of the sayings of Jesus, and I believe he would understand better my point of view: "Let the dead bury their dead," "The Publicans and the harlots go into the Kingdom of Heaven before you . . .," and even his sentimental pronouncement that "God is love," when considered with its full implications! Often his very quips have in them profound truths—"Render unto Caesar, etc."; and even his final words startle us into understanding the human situation as it actually is: "My God, My God, Why hast thou forsaken me?" Jesus was impatient of pretences, fearless and revolutionary, and his paradoxical side-way utterances still serve as "elf-shot" against the values supported by insensitive people. Without doubt Jesus himself entertained in his head thoughts opposed always to those who invent authoritative mortmain Gods for their own ends, and at every chance study to circumvent natural human happiness.

LJEWELYN POWYS.

[Letters are held over from E. F. Russell, and N. Charlton.]

Obituary

WILLIAM HOLLINGWORTH FINNEY

At 17 Ladbroke Drive, William Hollingworth Finney passed away, on April 6, and was interred at Golders Green, April 9.

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

BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 6.30, Mr. H. S. Wishart.
 NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Mr. Ebury. Highbury Corner, 8.0, Mr. Ebury. South Hill Park, 8.0, Monday, June 8, Mr. Ebury. Highbury Corner, 8.0, Wednesday, June 10, Mr. Ebury.
 SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 6.30, Mr. P. Goldman, Rushcroft Road, opposite Brixton Town Hall, 8.0, Tuesday, June 9, Mr. P. Goldman. Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town, 8.0, Friday, June 12, Mr. Ebury.
 SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, S. K. Ratcliffe—"English Intellectuals: True and False."
 WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Corner of Deanery Road, Water Lane, Stratford, E.): 7.0, Mr. Ivor Greenhouse.
 WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.30, Sunday, Messrs. Bryant, Wood, Evans and Tuson. 6.30, Messrs. Saphin, Bryant, Wood, Evans and Tuson. Wednesday, 7.30, Messrs. Bryant, Wood and Tuson. Thursday, 7.30, Mr. E. Saphin. *Freethinker* on sale at Kiosk. Should be ordered in advance to avoid disappointment.

(Continued on page 367)

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ESTABLISHED NEARLY HALF A CENTURY

(Continued from page 366)

COUNTRY

OUTDOOR.

EDINBURGH MARKET N.S.S. (Market Place) : 7.0, Mr. D. Maughan—"Christianity and Poverty."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Queen's Drive, Opposite Walton Baths) : 8.0, Sunday, A Lecture. Corner of High Park Street and Park Road, 8.0, Thursday, A Lecture.

NORTH EAST FEDERATION OF N.S.S BRANCHES (Market Place, South Shields) : 7.30, Mr. Whitehead will speak each evening on the following dates, June 4, 5 and 10, and at Newcastle, Bigg Market, on June 7, at 7.0, June 8, 9, 11 and 12, at 7.30.

PRESTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Preston Market Place) : 7.30, Mr. McClellan—"Is Christianity True?"

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Gill Bridge Avenue) : 7.0, A Lecture.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

President - - - CHAPMAN COHEN

General Secretary - R. H. ROSETTI.

68 FARRINGDON STREET, LONDON, E.C. 4

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

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

If you appreciate the work that Bradlaugh did, if you admire the ideals for which he lived and fought, it is not enough merely to admire. The need for action and combined effort is as great to-day as ever. You can best help by filling up the attached form and joining the Society founded by Bradlaugh.

PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS.

SECULARISM affirms that this life is the only one of which we have any knowledge, and that human effort should be wholly directed towards its improvement: it asserts that supernaturalism is based upon ignorance, and assails it as the historic enemy of progress.

Secularism affirms that progress is only possible on the basis of equal freedom of speech and publication; it affirms that liberty belongs of right to all, and that the free criticism of institutions and ideas is essential to a civilized State.

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