

# THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED *by* CHAPMAN COHEN •

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

Views and Opinions

**Exploiting the Weak**

I suppose it is because the *Daily Express* counts on the silence or the amusement of the more intelligent of its readers, and upon the interest and loyalty of the larger moronic element that it can do the things it does, and builds up a huge circulation by the joint subscriptions of both classes—plus, of course, the advertisers, who ask for quantity regardless of quality. Among the latest appeals of the *Express* to the mentally afflicted we noted last week the appearance of a full-sized portrait of a cat. As the spectator of the famous "Jumping frog" might have remarked, there was nothing "onusual about that yer cat." It was not there for its size or its beauty; it had won no competition. It was just an "ordinary" cat. But this cat had gone through a remarkable experience. It was in a room in a building in Cardiff, where a murder had been committed. Except the murderer, it was the only living thing there that saw the murder. So the *Express*, knowing the quality of the majority of its readers, and realizing that it takes the pennies of as many philosophers as it does fools to make up a shilling at one penny per head, and realizing also that there are many more fools than philosophers in the world, published the portrait of the cat as the only eye-witness to the murder. I am quite sure that if the *Express* could secure that cat and exhibit it in its Fleet Street windows, the road would soon be blocked by interested readers. There are great possibilities about that Cardiff cat.

Two days after the publication of the portrait of the cat who saw a murder, the *Express* gave another illustration of the care with which it provides sustenance for the more moronic section of its readers. Again, on the front page, in the most prominent position, it published a religious "thriller," headed in large type "Prayer." A little boy, Joseph Pater-son, was knocked down by a lorry at Shoreham, and was taken to hospital suffering from a fractured skull and other injuries. The father, so says the *Express*,

was told by the doctors that they "despaired" of the boy's life—which may mean only that the injuries were very bad—and at the moment of entrance to the hospital the doctor could not say whether the boy would live or die. But the doctor also said—so says the *Express*, that there was nothing left but prayer, and the *Express* heads its account with the single word "Prayer" in large type. To make the story spectacularly complete the father, we are told, did not believe in prayer. Nevertheless he went to the vicar of the Church of the Good Shepherd and told him about it. He also went to Toc H., of which he was a member, and told that organization about it. Then he visited a number of Churches and Chapels and told them about it. In the end the vicar, Toc H. and the Churches and Chapels organized a great harrage and told the Lord about it. The Lord, who might have ignored individual sniping yielded to the prayer harrage, and the boy of whose life the doctor despaired was cured. More than that, as the story would have lacked something if there had not been a conversion as well as a cure, the father did not believe in prayer, but does now. The son is cured, the father is converted, the people are encouraged to offer to the Lord the "sweet savour" of their prayers, and the *Express* has a front page article that will greatly please the mentally immature among its readers.

\* \* \*

**The Machinery of a Miracle**

It is true that the Lord might have interfered earlier in the story and *prevented* the child being run over. But what advertising value would there have been in that? If the child had been prevented crossing the road while the lorry was passing by a man or woman who foresaw the danger, or if the lorry driver had been influenced by the Lord to stop for a drink just before the boy crossed the road, nothing would have happened that, from the religious point of view, would have been worth chronicling. The child would never have known it had been saved from anything, the father would never have been converted, the Lord would never have received prayers. It looks as though the tag "It pays to advertise," is as popular in heaven as it is on earth, and it is clear that without advertising the power of prayer, people would as readily forget its value as they do the virtues of a particular soap. It is on wise lines that the Lord advertises his power among the ungodly, strengthens the faith of the Godly, and provides outlets for the ingenuity of our modern newspaper.

But the story is incomplete at this point. How was the boy cured after the hospital doctor had despaired of medical skill, and had advised prayer as a substitute? As usual the Lord worked through human agency. Physic and faith are mixed. Lying in the next bed to the injured boy was an airman who had "crashed" at Shoreham. To him was brought a brain specialist from London, Dr. Cairnes. The

doctor noticed the boy with the badly fractured skull and had a conversation with him, took an interest in his case and effected a cure—without any open appeal to prayer. But as the *Express* believes that the boy was cured by an answer to prayer, it is clear that the London specialist must have been part of the plan. He was a mere tool in the hands of "Providence."

#### Pure Design

Everyone knows the tremendous force of the argument for design based upon the alleged bringing together of a number of apparently unassociated factors to a given end. I think that if I had been the editor of the *Express*, I would, in this case, have gone the whole hog, and have asked the Atheist, how can he account for so many circumstances combining to the end of the conversion of Paterson senior, without allowing for divine agency. For it was evidently the conversion of the father that was the main feature in the whole performance. The boy could have been cured by God moving people to act in this and that manner, without anyone knowing. But in order to convert the father the child had to meet with an accident. To get the accident a lorry driver had to be driving along at the moment the child was moved to cross the road. The child had to be taken to the hospital at a time when a doctor who thought more of prayer than surgical skill was on duty. Then by another chain of events the Lord had to arrange that an airman should "crash," that he should be brought to the same hospital as the boy and placed in the bed next him, so that the specialist could become interested in the boy and cure his fractured skull, thus converting the father to the belief in prayer. Finally, as a kind of addendum to this series of events the *Express* had to be in existence, and to be convinced that the pennies of ten thousand fools are better than the thousand pennies of men of common sense. Attention would certainly be attracted to the *Express* in Shoreham, and it would thus reap the reward of its pious conduct. It is certain that if God had a hand in this business, events must have been planned as I have indicated. And what I have said is, after all, just another form of the argument which asks the Atheist whether any man can be stupid enough to believe that natural phenomena could have resulted from a "fortuitous concourse of atoms."

And yet things are still a bit obscure. A few months ago the editor of this paper was taken to hospital seriously ill—so ill that for a little time no one could say whether he would live or die. It is true that the doctor did not publicly say that he "despaired," nor did he recommend prayer. On the contrary, having the editor of the *Freethinker* for a patient led to his reading some of the editor's books. The first night the wicked editor wondered whether he would live or die, and reflected that dying was a very easy matter, otherwise so many fools would never die at all. He went to sleep, and within a fortnight was writing an article for the *Freethinker*. It almost looks as though honours are equal. A little boy meets with an accident and gets better because a lot of people make noises before the Lord, and the Lord, to keep them quiet, cures the boy. (There would obviously be no value in the noises if the Lord would in any case have cured the patient). The wicked and unrepentant editor asks no one to pray for him, no one does pray for him, but he gets better in what the doctors say is almost record time. There seems something not quite right somewhere. Even Jove nods.

#### Trusting to Ignorance

The *Express*, in the way it does things, is almost as fascinating to me as is the Bishop of London. In the issue for June 12, there is a note in the editorial

column on the Italian-Abyssinian question. It looks quite cheerfully at the state of affairs and wishes that Britain would at the request, or order, of Mussolini bring back the Mediterranean Fleet, cancel all sanctions, recognize the annexation of Abyssinia—thus legalizing one of the most cowardly pieces of brigandage of modern times, and would probably follow it up by Britain gaining Mussolini's good will by arranging a loan. It is not said that we must apologize to Mussolini for our interfering in the matter; that may follow.

But the advice of the *Express* is characteristic of the yellow press at its worst. It advises all members of the League of Nations Union to go to the Aldershot Tattoo.

There they will see an attack by British troops on Rangoon, Burma. The British have muskets and the natives have spears, and these natives who were conquered in the historical episode that this scene recalls were a howling mob with unkind ideas about prisoners. . . . It might remind them of Abyssinia. *First cast the beam out of thine own eye.*

That seems to touch bottom even for the yellow press, although quite in accord with the German and Italian Fascism, for which the *Express* appears to have considerable admiration. To hint that the Burmese were savages given to torturing prisoners is to place a rather dangerous reliance on the ignorance of one's readers. Some of them may know better, and to those who do not I commend the reading of Mr. Fielding Hall's *Soul of a People*, and his *A People at School*. Mr. Fielding was a British Government official, and knew the Burmese people intimately. He always writes of them as a kindly, well-disposed people without any fighting caste, and strict Buddhists. He had the greatest admiration for their ethical teaching, their good nature, and their general kindness. Moreover, I repeat, they were strict Buddhists. But Burma had some valuable ruby mines, and I am old enough to remember the newspaper crusade of calumny that was carried on against Theebaw, who was a sober, non-persecuting strict living Buddhist, and yet who, for some time before the war, was painted as a lecherous, drunken, persecuting ruffian. Eventually Burma was invaded and annexed. But the *Express* is quite as slanderous with regard to the Burmese Buddhists when it places them on the level of the Abyssinian Christians, as it is of our soldiers when it hints that they treated the Burmese as Mussolini treated the Abyssinians. We have done some very dirty things in our time; have robbed right and left, and have plastered the world with our moral cant and religious humbug. But at least British soldiers have never sheltered themselves behind native troops, or deliberately poured poison gas on women and children. It was Mussolini's Bravos that remained in the rear when the blacks were sent to the front. It was the Italian soldiers who restricted their activities mainly to pouring poison gas from the air on people without the slightest means of defence, and then marched in when the danger was past to receive the plaudits of the crowd and the congratulations of the castor-oil dictator of Italy.

If the *Express* can put the kind of thing over that I have just noted, I am not surprised that it finds it pays to look for supporters among the mental type to whom the picture of a cat that saw a murder offers a great attraction, or who can swallow the story of the cure by prayer. Like calls to like.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

He has read well who has learnt that there is more to read outside books than in them.—Thomas Hardy.

## The Making of a Saint

"The system which begins by making mental indolence a virtue and intellectual narrowness a part of sanctity, ends by putting a premium on hypocrisy."

John Morley.

"Europe is semi-barbarous at the present hour."

Landor.

The two most moving pieces of literature are, perhaps, Plato's account of the death of Socrates, and the transcript of the trial of Joan of Arc, and the latter is the more poignant. For, in Plato's stately sentences, Socrates seems to be so much the master of his fate, whilst, in the case of Joan, her verbal duel with her judicial murderers leaves one with the impression of a woman helpless in the fell clutch of circumstance.

Much water has flowed to the sea since Joan's tragic ordeal, and her interest to present-day Freethinkers is largely due to the fact that she was burnt alive as a heretic, and that she is now claimed by the Roman Catholic Church as one of their saints. During the terrible world-war, Notre-Dame cathedral, the most famous church in Paris, was the scene of a pious pilgrimage of the Romish faithful, inaugurated by the political Patriotic League, to supplicate Joan of Arc to implore the intercession of the "Holy Virgin" for victory. What a comment on the psychology of religious belief! Burnt for heresy, Joan is now claimed by the Great Lying Church, and exploited by a petty political association.

Joan's life-story has been retold in recent years by Anatole France, Andrew Lang, Bernard Shaw, and many others. There emerges a real portrait from the pages of research, and the records of her trial. First, the hard-working peasant girl. Then, the visionary, listening to her "Voices," commanding her to crown the Dauphin of France, and complete the unification of his kingdom. Then, further, as the inspiration of the army, which fulfilled her self-imposed task. And, last sad scene of all, the courageous, solitary woman, publicly burnt alive as a sorceress and a heretic, with the approval of the very church which afterwards canonized her.

We know how the world wagged in those far-off days of faith and ignorance. Its dirt, its grime, its scaldiness, and also the fair flowers of human nobility, mark out the old-world France in which Joan lived and exerted so potent an influence. With an imbecile King, ironically ruling by "divine right," a profligate Court and a corrupt priesthood, France was in a condition of "chaos and old night." Long years of civil war had reduced the unfortunate and unhappy French people to the condition almost of brute beasts. Truly, it was an Age of Faith. The wildest legends found ready believers. One French knight was said to have sold his hand to the Devil. A great baron—a Marshal of France, and one of Joan's companions-in-arms—is said to have decoyed young children to his lonely castles and offered their bodies as sacrifices to Satan. Even to-day this legend is directed against Jewish people. In this atmosphere of ignorance and credulity Joan of Arc herself appears like a lily in the very mouth of Tartarus, and, despite her heroic services to her country, she was treated worse than a mad dog, being publicly burnt alive as a heretic and a sorceress.

Undoubtedly, Joan was heretical, however pious and saintly. She put her own private views on religion and personal "inspiration" over and above that of the ecclesiastics and theologians of the Roman Catholic Church, and she aggravated her offence in the eyes of her pious murderers by the complete indifference of her replies. Her execution by burning

alive at the stake in public produced an enormous impression everywhere, an impression which the Romish Church will never efface by a trumpety and belated rehabilitation many centuries later.

Joan regarded herself as a soldier, never as a saint. But the Great Lying Church has added her name to the lengthy list of Christian "saints," and it must be admitted that in that welter of neurotics and tommyrotics there is no finer figure than that of Joan the peasant woman. There is enough drama, and to spare, in the very facts of her life, without inventing religious legends to impress the innocent laymen.

In the darkened and superstitious France in which Joan of Arc lived the power of the Roman Catholic Church was tremendous. It brooked no opposition, bribing the weak, and murdering the strong among its opponents. But its enormous power was eventually challenged by the advent of Voltaire, and the Encyclopædists. It was never subsequently so unquestioned and so unresisted, and since the coming of the great French Revolution, Priestcraft has not had a safe seat on French shoulders. Britain might have shared the fate of priest-ridden France, Italy, or Spain. But there is a wholesome obstinacy in British blood, which is cooler than that of the Latin races. The power of the Romish priests was as great at one time in England as in France, but it finished on this side of the Channel with the yellow glare of the human bonfire of Stratford and Smithfield. Englishmen might tolerate a Romish Cardinal's residence as magnificent as Hampton Court Palace, but they could not be indifferent to the burning alive of their fellow citizens for a matter of theological opinion.

Priestcraft can never do its worst again in this England of ours. We shall never again, as a people, permit the cesspool of the confessional, we shall never submit to the poisoned weapons of Priestcraft, its hypocritical affectations of celibacy, its tyranny in the home, its officiousness in public affairs, its menace and robbery at the death-bed. Even the English State Church, which is but a pale imitation of the Romish Church, has its days numbered, and will, before very long, be facing Disestablishment and Disendowment.

The Romish priests permitted the burning alive of Joan of Arc as a heretic, and long afterwards, pretend that she was one of their own saints. The innocent Catholic believers agree to the holy locus-pocus. This child-like credulity is passing wonderful in grown men and women. To study it closely is to essay an inquiry into the psychology of a crowd, and an ignorant one at that. Let there be no mistake whatever on this point. Roman Catholics are mainly ignorant people. They are not allowed to read any books, newspapers, or publications criticizing their religion. They are told that by doing so they are in danger of eternal fire and damnation. Even colporteurs of Protestant Bible Societies are ill-treated in Roman Catholic countries, for a zealous Catholic will no more read a Protestant version of the Christian Bible than he would read Ingersoll's books, or the works of Foote. If a Catholic young man attends a Freethought lecture, he sins more grievously than if he stole his employer's money, or seduced his own sister. Even the priests are ill-informed. The vast majority of Catholic priests are not really educated in the modern sense; they are only educated in the patten of their sorry profession. It is a case of the blind leading the blind. Fortunately, there are other than priestly sources of information. And the days of Priestcraft, Romish and Anglican alike, are numbered the moment it is faced by a really educated, instead of an ignorant, democracy.

MIMNERMUS.

## Things Worth Knowing\*

### XLV.

#### CHRISTIANITY AND MORALS

It is Hell, of course, that makes priests powerful, not heaven, for after thousands of years of so-called civilization fear remains the one common denominator of mankind. At the bottom of every approach to the gods, even in the most enlightened societies of to-day, lies the ancient motive of propitiation; the worshipper seeks avoidance, escape, immunity, pardon, mercy; as the Southern Methodists say in their Book of Discipline, his first desire is to "Plee the wrath to come." What remains, however brave, lofty and metaphysical in its terms, is no more than *lagniappe*, and of no serious import. When men cease to fear the gods they cease to be religious in any reasonable sense. They may continue to mouth pious formulæ, but they are no longer true believers. As some wit said once of Unitarianism, a movement typical of the modern effort to get rid of Hell, it is not a kind of Christianity at all, but simply a mattress for sceptical ex-Christians to fall on. The essence of all priestly morality is retribution, and without a hell of one sort or another retribution becomes mere rhetoric, signifying nothing. . . .

Priests are professional experts in both conduct and unpleasantness. How, letting their fancy run free, they have limned the latter you may find by examining such works as James Mew's *Traditional Aspects of Hell*. The Christian Hell, I opine to believe is the deepest, hottest of them all. It has gathered in all the hells of antiquity, and bent them to its constabulary purposes. Avernus has become the bottomless pit and Phlegethon its lake of brimstone. It is peopled by demons out of the mythologies of Egypt, Babylonia, Greece and Rome. It has borrowed tortures from the Celts and from the Teutons, the Jews and the Persians. These tortures are the bulwarks of all sacerdotal authority to-day, whether Catholic or Protestant. They constitute the overwhelming answer to every doubt, whether of theological dogma or parish government. "On the banks of the river of death," says E. B. Tylor in his *Primitive Culture*, "priests have stood for ages to bar the passage against all souls who cannot repeat their formulæ or pay their fee." "I know a holy man," said the good St. Chrysostom more than fifteen centuries ago, "who gave thanks for hell in his prayers." No wonder!

The priestly concept of correct conduct deserves a great deal more study than it has got. There are in it many rich opportunities for the more ghoulis variety of psychologists. In all countries, save where the clergy are transiently at odds with the state, it naturally ratifies the secular penal system. Thus, whatever is punishable by the ordinary courts is also punishable, additionally and with exaggeration, beyond the grave. But there are, beside, many offences, unknown to the state, that carry the same inordinate and eternal penalties. They divide themselves, in the main, into two well marked classes. The first includes acts which tend to break down the priestly authority and security; the second is made up of acts which priests themselves by their very character are specially forbidden to commit, and hence feel to be peculiarly corrupting and obnoxious. Examples of both classes are to be found conveniently in the juris-

prudence of Holy Church. Of the first three is the mandate that every Catholic, on penalty of mortal sin, must make his Easter duty, i.e., must go to confession, and take his communion at least once a year, preferably between Palm Sunday and Easter. The punishment *post mortem* for wilful and continued failure to do so is genuinely appalling; it is no less than eternal damnation. In other words it is precisely the same punishment, to the last jot and tittle, that is provided for entering an orphan asylum, putting all its inmates to tortures worthy of Mississippi Baptists, locking the doors upon them and setting fire to the building.

To the second class belong the various ecclesiastical interdicts of procedure which tend to facilitate acts of sex, and/or to make them more charming, e.g., contraception and divorce. The psychological springs of the savage excess of virtue here visible are no doubt to be found in the uncomfortable necessities of a celibate priesthood. To a clergyman living under a vow of chastity any act of sex is immoral, but his abhorrence of it naturally increases in proportion as it looks safe and is correspondingly tempting. As a prudent man, he is not much disturbed by invitations which carry their obvious and certain penalties; what shakes him is the enticement bar of any probable secular retribution. *Ergo*, the worst and damndest indulgence is that which goes unwhipped. So he teaches that it is no sin for a woman to bear a child to a worthless and drunken husband, even though she may believe with sound reason that it will be diseased and miserable all its life, but if she resorts to any device, however harmless and rational, to prevent its birth, she is doomed by his penology to roast in hell for ever, along with the assassin of orphans and the scoundrel who forgets his Easter Day.

The human race is stupid, but it is not so stupid that it lacks sufficient wit to see the irrationality in such excessive and barbaric punishments for what, at bottom, are quite rational acts. Thus it has always been more or less restive under priestly jurisprudence, and the history of religion is largely a history of its efforts, usually somewhat cautious, but sometimes violent and bloody, at rebellion. . . . The clergy, confronted by this ever-recurring questioning of their penal code, have always sought to keep it within bounds by taking control of the education of the young. They sometimes find it impolitic or even impossible to proceed against the concrete sceptic when he is full-grown, but if they can get hold of his children they can at least prepare for battle in the next generation. The Catholic Church, according to an accepted legend, asks for the tutorial custody of the child only up to his twelfth year, after that it is regarded as safe or hopelessly lost. All other organized churches make the same effort to impress the faith indelibly upon the innocent and tender. Among Catholics the parochial school is the chief agency; among Protestants there is the Sunday School; the Jews have similar devices, and so have the Mohammedans, the Brahmans, and the Buddhists. All seek by drastic training in youth to prepare for the doubts that are apt to come with years of reflection.

The priests were psychologists long before Freud. In the most remote ages one finds them alive to the fact that what is forcibly presented in the most impressionable years is bound to endure—if not on the plane of conscious reasoning, then at least in the depths of the unconscious. The Clergy of Holy Church see proofs of it every day. When the backslider, after years of contumacious abstention from the sacraments, comes at last to his death-bed, the faith of his nonage oozes out of his marrow to overcome him, and he dies with

\* 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.

the holy oils upon him and the crucifix at his lips. Faith, indeed, has been well compared by theologians to the artless confidence of a little child. It enters the human mind most effectively before reason has begun to function, and once it is implanted it is likely to stay. The only safe sceptic is one who was never exposed to faith in his infancy. Converts of more mature years are always more or less unreliable.

*A Treatise on the Gods,*  
by H. L. MENCKEN, pp. 112-117.

## A Plea for a Common Front

I HAVE been surprised from time to time to find in the *Freethinker* jeers directed at dialectical materialism, yet not a single voice raised in informed protest. Because I so deeply respect the part played in England by the Freethinking movement, I have been pained by this surprising alliance between the *Freethinker* and the dregs of gutter-journalism; and out of respect and friendliness for the real aims of the N.S.S. and the fine fighting tradition, in which Bradlaugh stands out as the main, but far from the only warrior, I am moved to protest. Mr. Chapman Cohen, with his wonted fairness, has given me permission to write this series of articles, in which I shall try to give some indication of the fundamentals of the Marxist position. To cover the whole area adequately is impossible; but I shall mention the books which anyone genuinely wishing to master the subject can obtain. The purpose of my articles is to provide a basis for discussion; I shall try to keep to the central issues; and I ask of any critics, only that they make the same effort, and that they make their criticism after studying the classic statements of dialectical materialism. It is surely no tyranny to ask that criticism should be informed, should base itself on something more than a few undigested quotations wrested from their context.

The N.S.S. should never forget that it represents the modern spear-head of the great English Materialist movement, which from Bacon to Darwin has contributed so enormously to human progress. It has had many heroes; and when the tale of the fight for freedom comes to be finally written, these men will take a high place. I am not carping at the work done by the present defenders of science and rationality, I merely wish to see if I cannot contribute something to that work, which has my profound respect. It seems to me that the struggle has now reached a point when all men of good-will must see the common basis on which they stand—or reaction will triumph. Now arrives the testing time of all that has been won during the last four centuries. To ignore the call to the common front is to become sectarian, reactionary—however “sincere” one may be in one’s “independence.” There is a point where such “sincerity” becomes mere egotism, anarchic, obstinate; and it is our business to search our consciences and find where we stand in the world-issues of to-day. But we cannot do that searching effectively unless we can clarify the issues.

In many respects the *Freethinker* keeps admirably to the points at issue in its criticism of bellicose bishops, Fascism, teadysism towards Royalty. (In this last matter it stands alone with the *Daily Worker*, as expressing an attitude to which any self-respecting individual can subscribe.) But from the dialectical-materialist viewpoint a greater co-ordination, and therefore greater effect, could be achieved by a deepening of awareness as to the social problems involved. What I mean by this will become clearer as I develop

my thesis. Meanwhile I wish to emphasize that it is because I find myself so much in sympathy with the *Freethinker’s* steady exposure of pietistic and ecclesiastical obscurantism that I wish to see the N.S.S. pulling its full weight in the emerging conflict. Fascism is the enemy, and Fascist preparations are incomparably more advanced in England than the great public doped by our national newspapers can realize.

It is not likely that the Baldwin Party will lead a Fascist coup. But they are content to do all the dirty work which will make such a coup possible. Their personal futility and “goodwill” are, of course, an aid in smudging over this dirty work; for full attention is not attracted, as it would be if a cabinet of “strong men” were in question. (We must not forget, however, how the “amiable” Dolfuss was used as the stalking-horse for the murderous attack on the non-revolutionary Labour Party in Austria.) Consider the steady increase of legislation which can be turned at need into instruments of full Fascist oppression; the soundings as to newspaper-censorship; the preparations for conscription (the *Daily Telegraph*, which can usually be trusted to let the Baldwin cat out of the bag, says in an editorial dealing with recruiting and “pernicious pacifist propaganda,” “By these [means] we may avoid any form of conscription”—more soundings!); the efforts made by the National Covenant to support Fascism in Germany and Italy (the naval agreement, the slowing-down of sanctions, Hoare-Laval plan), which have only been thwarted so far by strong outbursts of popular indignation; the vicious efforts being made to crush Trade Unionism, by title-bribing, etc., of the “Labour aristocracy,” by the proposed “industrial truce” for armaments, by ruthless police-action and imprisonment of militants; the militarization of the police, and the building-up of the R.A.F. out of the reactionary class-levels<sup>2</sup>; the use of the B.B.C. for re-action, and the tentative proposal of wireless-sets which (a Government monopoly) will only take British stations—on the Nazi model. . . . Here are the main items; to feel the strength of this Fascist movement one must, however, follow its growth from day to day. If one does so, one can have no doubt what the ruling-class in England are preparing. The excuse for the coup, when it comes, will, of course, be that agitators are making the trade-union get out of hand, and that “industrial peace” must be imposed. What that means in action, Germany reveals.

There are many well-meaning people who, in their ignorance of the dialectical meaning of history, play into the hands of the reaction which they really abhor. The cause of this self-betrayal is vagueness as to the social problem, so that political issues are abstracted into a no-man’s-land. E.g., the Pacifists who wanted Hitler’s “peace plan” to be seriously discussed—as if Hitler’s peace-plan could be abstracted from the internal crisis of German Fascism which is

<sup>1</sup> Here is another feeler in the *Telegraph*, which I notice as I finish this essay. Commenting on the anti-militarism of certain (Labour) municipal bodies, the leader-writer says, “Incidents such as these will *presently* [my italics] raise in a serious form the question whether, when the Government is making a great effort to secure the safety of the country, it can permit minor authorities to jeopardize its endeavours.” And here’s a feeler (“Scrutator,” in *Sunday Times*) that goes the whole-hog: “The trouble is that the reactions of democratic forms of government to a changing world are dangerously slow. . . . The problem in the main is that of creating a central will.” (See C.P. penny Peace pamphlet *I Accuse Baldwin*, by Harry Pollitt, for details of Baldwin’s support of Hitler.) The brutal Special Powers Act in Northern Ireland gives us fair warning of the “central will” that our ruling-class are preparing to impose on us.

<sup>2</sup> As I write, a prominent Fascist agitator has entered the R.A.F.

forcing and will continue to force Hitler into external aggression. These well-meaning people cloud over their social vagueness by clutching at everything that seems to promise "harmony," that seems to help in patching things up. (What the Marxist wants is also "harmony," but he recognizes that to obtain harmony one must first have a stable social basis.)

To these vague liberals the Marxist is a fanatic who preaches and creates class-war. As if the scientist who isolated a disease-germ was to be prosecuted for creating the disease! Many of these vague thinkers, to whom I will give the general term of liberals, would be insulted if one attributed to them the opinions of the Anti-Darwin Society about Darwin, yet they act just as irrationally with regard to Marx. The Anti-Darwin Society issues manifestoes which crudely blame Darwin for the struggle for existence! According to the Society, all modern troubles from Fascism to Communism are the result of the Evolutionary Theory. Here is a pretty example of religious thinking, the inability to distinguish the world of fact from the perceiving mind, so that the mind is imagined as having created the world. Because Darwin saw the facts of biology, he created them. "The Word was with God . . ." Because Marx brought consciousness inescapably to bear on the contradiction of class-society, Marx invented the class-war.

The facts are, of course, that it is the tremendous scientific vision of Darwin and Marx that has at last brought us within measurable distance of mastering the world. Darwin abolished teleology. Marx brought a scientific analysis to bear on society; and working by the light of dialectical materialism, of a concrete concept of movement, he was able not only to point out the contradictions inherent in the capitalist state, but also to prophesy the direction of the collapse and the nature of the transformation as the productive energies burst the capitalist integument. The proletariat, as the one social class, must be the basis of a further socialization, a further use of the mechanism of production. So far from having created class-war (which stares one in the face at every stage of recorded history), Marx made it possible for the transition to the next social stage to be made with a minimum of waste and suffering. He set into action forces that must ultimately end the class-war—or rather, gave to those forces their maximum of consciousness. So that Marx is really the prophet of the end of the class-war!

It is just that I should couple Marx and Darwin; for it is no accident that they appeared at the same period. Their work is supplementary. Both gave us the basis at last of a genuinely materialist outlook—a non-teleological dynamic dialectical attitude towards life.

Darwin made the concept of life fluid by smashing up the notion of god-given classification in biology. Marx enabled us to realize the dynamic fluidity of social life; he smashed the notion of social classes as god-given hierarchies. The two realizations had to come simultaneously. The reality of the development in society was demonstrated. On reading the *Origin of Species*, in 1859, Marx wrote, "This is the book which contains the basis in natural history from our point of view."

The anti-Darwinians accuse Darwin, that true scientist, of imposing theory on fact. The anti-Marxists accuse Marx, the most concrete thinker yet born, of dealing in abstractions. The reason is that teleological attitudes have become inbred with us; it is only with the greatest effort that we can attain the discipline of a materialist outlook; we get it in patches and then we lose it, betrayed to "idealism." Marx,

like Darwin, is so consistently true to scientific method, so searchingly vigilant to keep a concrete sense of the relations analysed, that he baffles the people to whom the idealist lie has become second-nature. Because he is impenetrable to such people they accuse him of ponderosity and dogma.

JACK LINDSAY.

(To be continued)

## The Voice of God

CHRISTIAN: "You say that an individual conscience is usually the product of either evolution or environment. You are mistaken. Conscience is an attribute implanted in the minds of all people by the Almighty to enable them to distinguish between right and wrong."

Sceptic: "Do you include those who profess a religion other than Christianity?"

C.: "I cannot speak for those who do not follow Christ. This is a mystery and I am content to treat it accordingly."

S.: "Cannot your spiritual advisers elucidate it?"

C.: "The mystery is beyond man's understanding."

S.: "Then I will confine my remarks to average law-abiding Christians, excluding habitual criminals and other abnormal characters. Do you maintain that their consciences direct them alike at all times?"

C.: "Yes."

S.: "Then how do you account for the innumerable changes in the standard of right and wrong which have taken place in the history of Christianity?"

C.: "What do you mean?"

S.: "In the middle ages it was customary to burn witches, and the executioners were religious, law-abiding Christians, whose consciences dictated they were doing right. Now their descendants would revolt at such an act. This is merely a typical example."

C.: "But Christianity does not say that the standard of human morality must remain fixed."

S.: "That is not my point—Christians maintain that their God is an immutable being, the same yesterday, to-day and for ever. He made a moral law that the destruction of witches was a Christian duty, and implanted consciences in his people to enable them to recognize that their obedience to this law was right. Do you contend that he has since changed his mind by revoking this law and giving his people modified consciences adapted to the altered situation? If not, you have no alternative but to agree with me that the modification is entirely the result of evolution."

C.: "It is a difficult question. What have you to say about environment?"

S.: "I say that environment is largely responsible for many aspects of the Christian sense of duty. In parts of Scotland conscience condemns dancing as a cardinal sin, in other parts of the kingdom it decrees that it is a healthy and harmless amusement; in parts of England, generally in the towns, it permits anyone doing a little digging in the garden on the Sabbath, in others, chiefly in country districts, it whippers in the ear that it is an offence even to cut a cabbage on the holy day; in hunting quarters it proclaims that fox and stag hunting are splendid sports, in others it favours the view that hunting dumb animals is a form of cruelty which the law should suppress; in some places it decides that gambling on the Stock Exchange is a moral transgression, in others it says the reverse; in Spain it allows bull-fighting and prohibits it in England; in many Christian countries it smiles at games played on the Sabbath, while in England it frowns upon them, and so on, *ad infinitum*."

C.: "And what do you say all this proves?"

S.: "I maintain these vagaries of the Christian Conscience are inconsistent with the idea of an instinct rooted in the divine, for it is evident that an omniscient being would not provide his people with a morals' indicator to function in this erratic manner. Speaking generally, the recognition by mankind of right and wrong is based upon accumulated experience of the col-

lective conduct most conducive to the general happiness of a particular community. As experience accumulates old ideas are discarded, and replaced by others more in harmony with the spirit of the times. This is how our standard of conduct gradually becomes higher. There is nothing supernatural in the process.

PRO REASON.

## Acid Drops

Mr. Ronald Gurner is the Headmaster of Whitgift School, Croydon, and appears to have peculiar ideas as to the ethical consideration that should govern the conduct of teachers who are in the pay of the State. At a recent meeting of the Association of Adult Religious Education, he seems to have regretted that "legally speaking neither Agnosticism nor even Atheism" can be made a bar to employment, but there were "in the secondary schools as a whole, a great number of sincere Christians who regarded the imparting of religious instruction as part of their professional duties, but also as a great opportunity."

It looks as though Mr. Gurner regrets that Agnostics and Atheists are not barred from the teaching profession altogether. In that case Mr. Gurner may comfort himself with the reflection that in many cases an open avowal of Atheism would stand in the way of appointment and in many more of promotion. Also he may feel pleased when he reflects that Atheistic teachers in State Schools are not in the habit of taking advantage of their position to force their opinions on the children committed to their care. And from Christian teachers taking their position as a great opportunity, the only meaning we can read into this is that Christian teachers, minus the sense of justice exhibited by non-Christians, see nothing wrong in taking advantage of their job, and using it for a purpose for which it is not intended—putting it to a use that right-minded men and women would refrain from. A little keener intelligence than Mr. Gurner displays might have stopped him so openly giving the game away.

The Rhos Recreation Park was created out of waste pit-land by voluntary labour. A bandstand was built but has never been used, although Rhos possesses a good village band, "as good as any in North Wales." Recently the Parks Committee refused to permit Sunday evening performances on the ground that music was not in keeping with the Sabbath day at Rhos. From this we are inclined to believe that very many things that are decent and wholesome are also not in keeping with the Sabbath day at Rhos.

The positive assurance given by the *Universe* the other day, that all unbaptized children went straight to Hell—even though it was an open question by theologians whether they frizzled when they got there—seems to have been not at all to the liking of some of its readers. Possibly a good many Catholic parents had the incredible hardihood to criticize their Holy Church. So the editor solemnly reproduces, in its issue of June 5, the following from the Oecumenical Council of Florence "whose teaching is infallible":—

The souls of those who depart this life, either in actual mortal sin, or in original sin only, go down at once into Hell, there, however, to suffer disparate penalties.

And in case the critics are still unconvinced, there is the following from Pope Pius VI.:—

I condemn the doctrine that rejects that part of the lower regions known as the limbo of infants in which the souls of those dying in original sin alone are punished with the pain of loss without the pain of fire.

That ought to be plain enough for all the hesitating heretics who ought to be condemned for their heresy to eternal fire. But to clinch the matter there is the final pronouncement of a great theologian, Dr. Miller,

who distinctly says that while the unbaptized infants "are deprived of the beatific vision of God, it is most improbable that they suffer from the fire of Hell," which ought to settle the matter for all time; unbaptized infants *do* go to Hell. The editor of the *Universe* contends that our revulsion to the doctrine is due "to the softness of this present age which underlies those of our correspondents who describe it as cruel or unjust." And to that we say, hear, hear! If the Roman Catholic religion be true, there *must* be a Hell of eternal fire into which doubters, blasphemers, and unbaptized babies are sure to go. What a lot of virtue is sometimes in that little word *if!*

It is either in or out with the Roman Church. We note two items in one of its popular journals. Father Getino, who wrote a work on the great number of people saved from Hell, which was immediately put on the Index by the Holy Office, has now made public submission to the will of the Holy See. And, in answer to a correspondent, the editor says, "Implicit obedience to the Confessor's direction is absolutely necessary." Complete submission to the will of the Church is the only way it can keep its members together. But what an ideal!

The religious question is quite as acute in India as anywhere else—perhaps more so. For example, there are at least 70,000,000 "untouchables" who all belong to Hinduism—which religion takes care to keep them untouchable. Some of them, however, held a mass meeting the other day and invited Moslems, Sikhs, Hindus, and Christians to address them, and to point out to which religion the poor outcasts ought to belong so as no longer to be outcast. The fervent oratory which ensued brought no decision, but the *Church Times* declares it is very dubious about a mass conversion to Christianity. "Conversion must," it says, "if it be sincere, be the result of individual conviction." But why cannot a mass conversion of untouchables be as sincere as a mass conversion at a revival meeting or at an Oxford Group?

To say, as the paper does say, that "In Saxon days, when mass conversions of Englishmen were made, the choice lay between pagan superstition and a clearly defined Christian system" is unmitigated nonsense. The idea that "Englishmen" in the sixth or seventh century were able carefully to compare the rival systems, and to decide that one was a pagan superstition and the other the true religion shows a lamentable lack of historical perspective. Most mass conversions were made either at the point of the sword, or through the sheep-like following of ignoramuses. Whether Christianity or Islam would make the poor outcast Hindus welcome to all their respective believers remains to be seen. It would be better to realize that religion by itself will never solve the problem.

But the cream of the whole situation lies in the comments of a Christian spectator at the Conference, who declares that his "own feeling was, that the Christian case could have been much better put." But could it? Could the Christian case ever be better put? The other speakers did not seem to be in a much better plight either. Most of the audience received them with shouts of laughter. It is one thing for the Hindu religion, or Islam, or Christianity, to preach brotherly love; quite another to practise it. This was sensed by the "untouchable" audience, and is why the Conference so ignominiously failed.

A critic in one of our religious journals, dealing with Prof. Loehr's *A History of Religion in the Old Testament*, which is divided into three parts, says that "the first part of the book is the least satisfactory. It is inevitably sketchy. Any description of the remote origins of Hebrew religion is bound to be largely conjectural . . . and can hardly avoid raising questions that it is impossible to answer." This is Modernism with a vengeance! For centuries we have been given to under-

stand that Genesis and the Pentateuch generally were God's Own Precious Word, the Final Truth for all time; and it is quite amusing to find how easily they are dismissed as "largely conjectural." The real truth is that the "Hebrew religion" of the earliest times is totally unlike that of to-day. If the real truth could be known we should find that the earliest religions were all based on the most stupid fear and ignorance; and, apart from some dubious ethics, that is all religion is to-day.

We note that the Universities' Mission to Central Africa is complaining that while "the mission fields are white with harvest," the labourers, "though heroically faithful, are pitifully few in numbers, and desperately hampered by the lack of material equipment for their work." This is good news, as was the declaration of Canon Spanton, who said that "the African was beginning to do for himself many things which had been done for him by Europeans, and he was doing them better because he was an African." It is time that the Africans were left in peace to do these things—at their own expense. We can use any money raised for them to better advantage here and now.

Professor Carnegie Simpson, D.D., is one of the tiny group of Christian teachers who spoke and wrote wisely and decently about our national attitude in 1914-1918. He writes to-day in the *British Weekly*. Unlike all other Christians almost, he realizes that to be just is greater than to be religious. At least that is how we read his admirable warning against the use of the phrase "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God . . ." He says:—

If the expression "the Kingdom of God" raises, as it does, theological and other difficulties, let us, for our present purpose, confine ourselves to the last word—*righteousness*. The only solid and durable foundation on which to build international security and peace is that which is right and just and equitable and fair as between nation and nation.

We can pay Dr. Simpson no higher praise than to say that the whole of his article stands out as exceptional in a desert of dissertations glorifying God but forgetting human needs and human justice.

The Rev. McEwan Lawson, B.D., is witty and almost blasphemous. He says, "For many, God has ceased to be either a judge or a father, and has become a vague 'First Cause,' whose dwelling is the light of setting suns"—a very indefinite address. But Mr. Lawson is quite as vague about the address of his own superior God. "Heaven," after all would worry the postman no less than Wordsworth's high-flown imagery. Mr. Lawson also tells of the "motor-minded church-goer of to-day, unable to comprehend the road troubles of 'Christian'" (in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*). Mr. Lawson should read Nathaniel Hawthorne's ironical "Celestial Railroad," which solves Christian's problem with a touch of the genius of Swift.

Methodists are excellent business men—and always on the spot for trade openings. Dr. William Younger asks with comic gravity: "What is the greatest need of the peoples of Europe?" It is the usual rhetorical question in the advertising column where the advertiser always asks merely to give the right answer himself . . . in the interests of business egoism. The Brewer says Beer, the tipster says My Tips, and Dr. Younger says, "A Living Redemptive Church." We wonder if a parson ever hears of any catastrophe, any problem, anything at all, without feeling for his business card.

In the Farewell Sermon of the Rev. F. W. Norwood at the City Temple, he eulogized Faith. We were interested to read exactly "What" it was that Mr. Norwood found so important to have Faith in. He tells us. He says his "attention was riveted the other day" on something he had apparently overlooked previously. It was the very very last word—no, the last Noise made by Christ, after His last word. Nobody ever even guessed what it was. All we are told is that Christ "cried with a loud voice and yielded up the ghost." Not much basis for faith there, one would think. But this is what our orator makes of it:—

I believe in that voice. I hear its tones. I catch its note of authority—that ringing shout of Christ athwart the ages. I hear it in my soul, and I will follow after it till I die.

Even parsons occasionally realize that "Fear" is not a winning card to play in a world like this. They notice how people laugh when a parson tells them that "The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." To the rescue comes the Rev. Dr. A. Herbert Gray, who says, in *St. Martin's Review*, Why not "sublimate" fear? He simply means call it by another name. He favours "the only sufficient sublimation of Fear" . . . to "Awe and Reverence." It would be just as sensible to translate it into Portuguese or double-Dutch . . . or better still, continue to call it fear if you mean fear.

Mr. Carl N. Taylor, in *Odyssey of the Islands* gives some grim stories of head-hunting. A young man who had become a Christian returned to his tribe to look for a wife. But the girl he chose would have nothing to do with him unless he proved his manhood in the time-honoured way—by bringing her a head. The young man went off and waited beside a trail near the girl's home:—

With his bolo unsheathed, he was presently rewarded by the sound of two people coming along the trail. When they were abreast of his hiding place, he stepped out and, with two quick strokes, lopped off their heads. Later, he presented the heads to the girl.

She looked at them: they were the heads of her mother and father.

She said: "You are a man, after all. I will be your wife."

The salutary results of accepting the Gospel of Christ are once more made manifest.

We deeply sympathize with the Rev. Bertrand Coggle, a Christian Pacifist, who cannot understand how his fellow-Christians can disagree with him. Talking about poison-gas and other horrors of war, he pathetically asks, "Can these modern methods be used by the Holy Ghost?" Why not? The Bible has plenty of "revelations" about "ancient" methods of Holy War quite as horrible as poison-gas. We need only refer to the "fire and brimstone" which Christ Himself assures us was "rained from Heaven" (Luke xvii. 29). Doubtless the Holy Ghost held 33⅓ per cent shares in the Heavenly Arms Factory, which supplied an effective "Flaming Sword"—with patent director-control (see Gen. iii. 24), and to which all Christians are referred for complete war equipment, including specially the famous "Sword of the Spirit" (Eph. vi. 17).

The *Literary Digest* has a number of Letters on Capital Punishment. Three Christians contribute to the discussion. Needless to say they represent three distinctly differing points of view. One, from Iowa, proves beyond doubt that God shares the Iowa man's opinion, as expressed in "important texts," and he concludes: "How can anyone approve of capital punishment and still believe the Bible?" A Carolina correspondent gives other texts, and proves that capital punishment laws are "emphasized three times . . . and there are plenty of other scriptures to support these." A Californian lady—bless her—reminds us that Jesus not only abolished the law in question, but He went ever so much further—He told us to "turn the other cheek"—meaning, as would appear, that if a man murders one of your children you should pass him over another child or two to kill.

Some of our readers may have heard of Lucy Grey, but not in this connexion. A North-country parson was requested by a deputation of his parishioners to pray for Lucy Grey. On the Wednesday night he was informed that it would not be necessary to renew the prayer on the following Sunday. "Is she better?" he asked. "She won to-day," he was told, "and the whole parish backed her!"



## YOU and the "Freethinker"

I HAVE been writing in the *Freethinker* ever since 1897, and since then there has only been a single issue which has not had at least one article from me, to say nothing of paragraphs. This is a journalistic record, and I feel rather proud that after 39 years I have not been snowed under with letters from subscribers asking me to "lay off." I have also been editor, officially, since 1915.

The Annual Conference of the N.S.S. passed a resolution congratulating me on my editorial coming-of-age, and, against my wish, added to the original resolution the suggestion that something should be done about it in the way of suitable recognition. Now I like to be helpful, and I am going to suggest a way in which that addendum can usefully be carried into effect.

The *Freethinker* is fifty-five years old. It is the oldest Freethought journal in Europe, and none has done more valuable work. Take the *Freethinker* out of the records of the past fifty years, and in the history of Freethought in this country there is a gap that remains unexplainable. It has inspired Christians to revolt, led the more courageous Freethinkers in the fight, and encouraged the more timid ones to be a little bolder in their heresy than they otherwise would have been. It has made many enemies, but also many friends, and the loyalty of the latter has more than compensated the hatred of the former.

But, because perhaps of its boldness, the *Freethinker* has never been a financial success. It has, of course, paid its way, but that is due to the loyalty of its friends, not to its income from sales; and it has very little from advertisements.

Now, when the Annual Conference enthusiastically expressed its desire to mark my twenty-one years of editorship in a suitable manner, I saw a way of gratifying a long standing ambition. Before I join the "immortal caravan" I want to see the *Freethinker* paying its way through sales, taking its present basis of expenditure as a datum. I emphasize this last point because I do not wish it to be thought that, if the very simple plan I am about to propose is carried into effect, the success will make for the personal benefit of anyone. My own cabinet-minister-like salary of three guineas per week for editing, managing and writing, will continue to be taken when it is there, and to be gone without when it is not. Payments in all other directions will continue as before. The greater sales I believe my plan will secure will simply help to do away with a continuous loss which is, really, the only anxiety I have.

The present position is this. The *Freethinker* Endowment Trust, formed some years back, brings in an annual income of over three hundred pounds. But the total deficit is still in the neighbourhood of £450, which leaves a net deficit of about £150, and in the near future certain investments that at present yield five per cent will be reduced to three or three and a half.

At this point I must ask for forgiveness if, in order to make myself quite clear, I am guilty of what to some may sound like conceit. The things I have named do not worry me so long as I remain editor. I know very well that whatever I ask for, within reason, will be cheerfully given. But then I have been half a century with the movement; and I believe I possess the confidence of as nearly all Freethinkers as any leader can ever expect.

But one day my editorship must cease. And my successor—whoever he is—will have to "make good" before he can hope to possess the same confidence

that I enjoy. Hence my desire to see that the paper is paying its way through sales and the income from the Endowment Trust in the interval between the new editor's appearance and his gaining the full confidence of the friends of the paper.

Now I do not see how making a personal presentation to me will achieve the purpose I have in view. It would, of course, relieve me of a certain amount of worry, and less worry might help me to live for a few years longer. But as, fortunately, we all have to die some time, and as the days that follow death are without length to the dead, I do not see that a few years more or less make any difference to a state in which years have no significance whatever. It is really as stupid to live with the mere ambition of leaving behind one a lengthy tally of years as it is to toil in order to leave behind much money—which is really a frustrated expression of the desire to take it with one.

So I accept, subject to my exercising the right to say in what way this shall be done, the suggestion that my services as editor shall be suitably recognized. The recognition I ask for is one that will involve the expenditure of a very small amount of money, and the doing of a not very great amount of work. The limit of the expenditure is thirteen shillings, to be spread over one year. The amount of work—well, that depends upon the individual.

Here is the plan. I want as many as are interested in the *Freethinker* and its work to make himself or herself (I would wager that on the whole a woman will succeed quicker than a man at the job) responsible for one extra copy of the paper per week for one year at most. The extra copy of the paper is to be used to give to a likely reader, and may be dropped as soon as a new subscriber is found. It should not be difficult for at least a thousand present readers to accomplish this task. Until this is done the extra copy per week may be taken as a self-inflicted fine for failure or laziness, or both. If at the end of a year it is found impossible to find a new recruit in one's circle of acquaintances, then the task may be abandoned, and that particular group of people be permitted as Heine said, to go to Hell in its own fashion.

This scheme does not look very heroic; there is no need for anyone to give up smoking, or going to the Cinema, or patching his old trousers instead of buying new ones. But its very simplicity should secure its success, and it would mean establishing a new record in the history of Freethought. I am conceited enough to believe that there would be a large number eager to participate in any proposal to give me some personal testimony of their appreciation of my work. I can assure all my friends, and I have had a recent experience of how deep and genuine that friendship is, that what I have asked for is the only testimonial I desire. A very few coppers, and a very moderate amount of work will do the trick.

I shall be very pleased to hear from those who intend co-operating in this effort, and to hear from time to time of what success is achieved, or to have any suggestions for the furtherance of the scheme they may care to make.

The plan ought to be carried through; it can be carried through; how many readers will say that it shall be carried through?

CHAPMAN COHEN.

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The legitimate powers of government extend to such acts only as are injurious to others. But it does me no injury for my neighbour to say there are twenty gods or no god.—Jefferson.

# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTER

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. MEAD.—The account of the meetings is rather late for insertion. It should have been sent much earlier.

II. BLACK.—We are sorry we did not see you again before you left London. But you appear to have had a good time. Thanks for cuttings.

To Advertising and Distributing the *Freethinker*.—Don Fisher, 3s.

THOS. B. MILLER.—Thanks for the address of a likely new reader, paper being sent for the next four weeks. Glad to hear from an old reader of 30 years standing.

II. S. WISHART.—Sorry the report did not accurately record what you said with reference to Vice-Presidents. The correction will be made and inserted in the official minutes.

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.

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

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

## Sugar Plums

We commented last week on the issue of a serial pamphlet, published in the U.S.A. *The Freethinker's Library*, but which is advertised on handbills as the *Freethinker*. The periodical is issued by Mr. Haldeman-Julius, and written by Mr. Joseph McCabe. The advertisement seems to have aimed at giving rise to the impression that it has something to do with this paper. Since writing the paragraph we have received many letters on the matter expressing a rather warm opinion on the policy adopted, and one from the United States which bears out what we have said. We do not purpose publishing these, neither are we publishing a lengthy letter which we have received from Mr. Ralph Hall Caine, mainly because of its length and complete irrelevancy. But it does deserve a word or two of comment.

Mr. Caine begins by giving some quite unnecessary advice on the law of copyright. We are quite aware there is no copyright in a title, although, right or not right, what has been done is quite discreditable among respectable publishers. But if Mr. Caine knows his law he must be aware that there would be no difficulty whatever in obtaining an injunction prohibiting the circulation of the advertisement by anyone resident in this country. Mr. Caine then tells us that "nobody buys a handbill." We never imagined they did, but why advertise among Freethinkers, a handbill bearing the title the *Freethinker*, without any indication that the publication advertised bears another name, and when anyone sends money for the paper, *per advertisement*, why send *The Freethinker's Library*?

Next, Mr. Caine treats us to a discourse on the valuable work of Mr. McCabe and Mr. Haldeman-Julius, a matter with which we have no concern. Mr. Haldeman-Julius may be correct when he advertises Mr. McCabe as the Admiral Crichton among British philosophers, scientists, historians and men of letters, and Mr. Haldeman-Julius may be a man of the vast encyclopedic

knowledge that Mr. McCabe says he is. It is not the value of the work done, but the manner of advertising it that is in question. This may be "smart" business, but it is not a very honest proceeding. Nor do we think Mr. Caine makes a very effective advocate. He would have shown more common sense, to say nothing of a better sense of justice had he remained silent. His closing paragraph, with the suggestion that what we said was due to the "over-hang" of our recent illness, and that "when Mr. Chapman Cohen, whose illness we all deplore, is fully restored to health, he will hasten to make *amende honourable*," is just impertinence. If our illness had reduced us to the level of Mr. Caine's letter, we hope we should have had enough common sense left to stop writing altogether.

Mr. Cohen does not often notice idle stories about himself, even when told by Freethinkers, and hardly ever when told by Christians. But he was rather amused when he was told at the N.S.S. Conference of the large sums he received from his lecturing. In an idle moment he looked through his diary, which contains an account of his income from lecturing for 1933-4-5. He is almost ashamed to say what this is. The net profit received by him from Freethought lectures from January 1, 1933 to December 1 1935 (three years) was well under £100. In strict truth there has not been during Mr. Cohen's 47 years of lecturing on the Freethought platform any regular speaker who has taken less from lecturing, or who has done more. Sometimes he does not receive enough to cover expenses; sometimes he gets enough to pay expenses; sometimes there is a pound or maybe two, for three days from home. And this, after lecturing to audiences that are usually two or three times as large as the attendance at any other Freethought lecture. We do not expect that this plain and verifiable statement will stop the mouths of liars, but it may let them know that there is little they can say that does not reach Mr. Cohen's ears sooner or later.

We have received a note from a member of the Committee of the Glasgow Branch of the N.S.S., that the Executive's Annual Report does not mention that it was owing to the efforts of the Glasgow Branch that a new Branch of the Society was opened at Edinburgh. We are afraid that there are a very large number of men and women all over the country whose efforts are not mentioned in the Report, and it should be obvious to all that if this were done, either in the case of Branches or individuals, the Annual Report would be very uninteresting reading to the general body of Freethinkers, and it would have to be extended to the size of a volume. General acknowledgement of such services is made in nearly every Annual Report, and it is hardly possible to do more. Special acknowledgment of such work or services is made in these columns from time to time, when Secretaries are business-like and prompt enough to send on accounts. And brief notices of Branch activities are also printed in the *Freethinker* when they are sent in. Sometime ago we tried to make a special feature of these notices—limited to thirty or forty lines—but found that Secretaries did not rise to the invitation.

For the rest, we can only say that no one appreciates more than the President of the Society the value of the work done by men and women all over the country for Freethought. It would be impossible for the work to be done without them, and he has in writing and in speech paid tribute to what they do. It is unfortunate that writers and speakers should be so much in the limelight, but it is always well to remember that the work of the world is largely done by those that lead unknown lives and rest in unknown graves.

We are pleased to see that the Sunderland Branch of the N.S.S. is keeping up its protest against the refusal of the local bigots to place the *Freethinker* in the public library. If religious bigotry was not so institutionalized it would strike the average man or woman as a monstrous thing for a number of very religious men to keep a Freethought paper out of the public library, because they do not agree with its teachings, while liber-

ally plastering the place with papers representing their own "opinions." When Upton Sinclair was in England, it is reported that he was asked whether there was more "graft" in America than in England. "Certainly," he replied. Then he explained. "The reason is," he said, "that in your country 'graft' is institutionalized, in our country it is not." In this country people can certainly get away with the most monstrous acts of bigotry, and there is no outcry because it is part of the constitution of the country. We hope the Sunderland Branch will keep up its agitation, both in the press and at their public meetings.

We note a report in the *Streatham News* of a lecture by Mr. George Bedborough, before the local Adult School, on the subject, "St. Ignatius Loyola." Mr. Bedborough appears to have given some Protestants credit for preserving works of art which a stupid religious iconoclasm would have destroyed, but his main theme took the form of a drastic criticism of Jesuitism, and the claim that all churches are evil because they call upon man to surrender his intellect in favour of revelation. It looks as though the Adult School had probably more plain speaking than usually falls to their lot, and we compliment the *Streatham News* on its liberality in publishing the report.

Mr. G. Whitehead will be in Scotland for the next three weeks, and will commence open-air meetings at the Mound, Edinburgh, on Saturday evening, June 20, at 7.30, and continue each evening at the same time for the following week. The local N.S.S. Branch has control of the meetings, and has been making good headway. Special supplies of Pioneer Press literature have been sent, and the week's work can be made to yield increased publicity to the local movement if full advantage is taken of the meetings.

In connexion with the effort being made to form a branch of the N.S.S. in Sheffield, Mr. E. V. Birkby will lecture at Barkers Pool, Sheffield, at 7.30 this evening (June 21), and he asks all interested to give support by their presence. There are enough Freethinkers in Sheffield, not only to make the meeting a success, but also to form a very strong Branch of the N.S.S. When Freethinkers organize themselves to something approaching their actual strength in the country, Christian impudence towards them will receive a check, and the bigots will become uneasy.

## Ireland and the Church

The Catholic Church in Ireland is all-powerful; there is no force can withstand her, and it would be suicidal to attempt to do so. So wail the timid. The Hierarchy of the Church would like to believe in its own mind that this was so. A few weeks ago three thousand Catholics refused to allow a meeting to be held because they said it would be the commencement of an attack upon their faith, and they talked in fearsome tones of Mexico, Spain, Germany and the U.S.S.R. More meetings were attacked. Priests openly encouraged these attacks. In the League of Mary, the various branches of the Catholic Young Men's Association and other Catholic bodies, the cry of "Our Faith is in danger" was heard. Night after night men and women were harangued from the pulpit. Night after night they were told the usual atrocity yarns of burning churches and tortured priests. Some asked for pictures, but what are a few among so many?

Now Dublin is shocked by a callous and brutal murder. A woman, Florence Byrne, known to her neighbours as a kindly woman and of a charitable disposition, was found lying in front of a cooking stove, on which were set pots and pans preparing the even-

ing meal. She was swimming in blood and her throat was cut from ear to ear. One, Joseph Egan, has been arrested and charged with the murder. He has made a confession in which he alleges that the murdered woman was "always giving knocks to priests and nuns. I do not want to be hearing that, because I am a Catholic." The man will be tried, and later on may be taken to the prison and hung for this crime. What shall we say of a Church that has instilled this foul hatred into the minds of its adherents? What shall we say of those priests and nuns who, fearing the inevitable, seek to perpetuate their superstitious rule by inflaming the minds of the people?

The Catholic Church, despite what people say, is not so powerful. Science marches on through the radio, in the progressive magazines and journals and expresses itself in every form of human activity. The veil is stripped from the Vatican by the cinema and the mystery of the Pope is no more as his feeble voice comes over the radio. The Catholic Church blessed the Catholic guns of Catholic Italy as they proved more powerful than the Catholic assegais of Catholic Abyssinia. And because the Catholic Church could play this double-sided game and still maintain its hold on millions of people, some people believe it can control for all time to come. Let us examine the situation in Ireland.

I have argued with priests, from the young priest to the monsignor, of the position in Ireland. They, in private moments, express their fears of the growing discontent among the masses. Why? Because the masses are objecting to the high demands being made upon their slender purses by the Churches. As one country after another departs from the Church the call goes out from the Vatican for more money to enable it to wage a campaign to bring these countries back into the fold. The appeals for money, obviously, can only be made in those countries which still remain under the influence of the Church. The few countries remaining are being heavily taxed. Some of these countries which still remain refuse to pay. Countries like Ireland still pay. It is safe to say that the average poor family in Dublin contributes on an average of four to five shillings a week. The cost of living is rising and unemployment is increasing. Though these factors daily aggravate the situation in the lives of the poor, the Church does not lessen its demands. The young priests complain they cannot collect money as they formerly did. They further complain that they do not relish the idea of taking money from people who cannot clothe themselves. The young priests have not been so long in the service of the Church as to feel as case-hardened as the older priests. The discontent grows apace: Collections are falling. The more they fall the more the priests fulminate, and the more they fulminate the more people begin to grow restless and defy the collectors to do their worst.

You cannot expect an ass to carry the same load as a four-ton truck. This is what the Church in Ireland is expecting from the people. Without this support it cannot carry on. Every move that aims at progress is labelled ANTI-GOD. The Church ever on the side of the rich dare not face the burning social questions of the hour. The old cry of living a terrible life on earth in return for a life of pleasure in heaven no longer influences people. One hour of life and I will take a chance with what follows seems to be the prevailing idea.

The Catholic Church all-powerful? King Canute tried to stop the waves of the ocean. The Catholic Church orders science to stand still, but science marches on over the decaying remains of a superstitious creed.

## Christian Imposture

### I.

WHEN one goes thoroughly into the question of what is known as Christian theology, it is difficult to believe that for at least seventeen centuries, men could have wasted their time and energy in discussing and trying to explain it. It is difficult to believe that such nonsense as consubstantiation, transubstantiation, redemption, incarnation, virgin birth, immaculate conception, original sin, fall of man, good and bad angels, limbo, purgatory, hell, and dozens of similar questions could ever be seriously discussed by rational men. What happens to anybody if he believes or does not believe. What *could* happen? I admit, of course, that he might go to heaven or hell as the case may be—that is, if Christianity be true. But that is the very point at issue. It has to be proved first before the threats of hell-fire, or what some would think infinitely worse, a sojourn in heaven with Jesus and Peter, could have any effect. I gladly admit if Christianity be true there is a hell, with eternal fire and millions, possibly billions, of devils. I cannot envisage a Christianity without a hell and its horrific fires. And I am ready to admit the whole of the rest of Christian theology—if Christianity be true. But what happens if it be not true?

These and plenty of other thoughts came to me when looking through M. Louis Coulange's *Religious Inventions and Frauds* (Watts & Co., 10s. 6d. net.) It is according to the announcement in the Preface, a translation from the French, entitled *Catéchisme pour Adultes*, which certainly does not describe the contents of the book. Neither does the English title exactly. It would have been far better to have called it *Christian Frauds*, and have done with it; for M. Coulange discusses little else. Moreover he takes for granted that by Christianity is meant Roman Catholicism, for his book is really an explanation of that religion—or if one prefers it, a discussion as to its origins and what these origins are worth.

Many of the subjects dealt with have been dealt with in other books; but M. Coulange has got here together in one volume a most valuable collection of facts against the huge imposture and organization known as the One True Faith. It is, indeed, a most damning indictment; and all the more so because the author was a practising Roman Catholic priest. By day he submitted, like a true son of the Church, to its decrees; by night, he worked at a series of books specially designed to undermine the whole of its doctrines. These works, written under different names, had a large circulation, and must have done incalculable harm to the Christian religion as it was understood in France. M. Coulange attacked it with the pen of a scholar, a priest who knew his religion as no mere layman could know it. And it is this which makes his work so valuable. A book like this is a shattering blow to the Church. And the Church acts as it almost always has acted when attacked in this way. It simply ignores the attack, trusting to its sheep-like followers not to read a forbidden work, even if they heard a great deal about it.

M. Coulange first deals with the supreme question—that of God. The God of philosophy—if there is one—he wastes little time upon. What exactly was the conception of deity held by the early Jews, and the early Christians? And we are given an extremely interesting dissertation on the subject in which the opinions of men like Marcion, Justin and Augustine are explained together with the way in which they and others shaped Christian theology.

M. Coulange has some pregnant words of his own, however, on the question of deity. He says:—

Let us stay no longer in a land of dreams. For it is dreaming to imagine set over man a guardian Providence that guides him and surrounds him with care, in the same way as it was dreaming to attribute to the earth, a distinctive place in the centre of the universe. . . . Pascal told us that the God of the Christians is a hidden God. To-day, more than ever, God hides Himself. Everything goes on in the Universe as if He did not exist. . . . science has killed Providence. . . . If God does exist, He does not concern Himself with this earth. . . . He takes no interest in the earthly life of man.

And M. Coulange points out that while "cultured minds in great numbers still declare themselves in favour of this existence, what will be thought in the future, when the progress of the sciences has brought further enlightenment to humanity?"

For the God of Augustine, the author has the greatest contempt. He calls him a monster—as indeed a God with a Hell would be. And he comes down to the modern conception, a Creator, an architect-God, a God who is responsible for the whole course of evolution, with its terrible carnivorous beasts and its microbial diseases. "What can he be said," he asks scornfully, "for the creator-God?" And his answer is the same as for the God of St. Augustine, "He is a monster!" That is, "He would be a monster if he existed." For "God is a frightful nightmare produced by reasoning in the services of a delirious imagination." M. Coulange certainly does not mince matters.

Nowadays, he points out, Theists are divided into two camps—the philosophers and the mystics. Their beliefs are subjected to the same critical analysis as is given to the God of the true believers with equally devastating results. And he concludes this part of his examination with the remark that "while the simple will continue to keep their God, the scholar, with unwearying ardour, will pursue his way in quest of the laws which govern the universe." It is the gospel of Secularism which he preaches. He has no use for those who sit on the fence and say, with awe, and perhaps a little fear, that after all, there *may* be—something! The reverent Rationalist and Agnostic will certainly not like M. Coulange's handling of the God-problem. There is quite a long chapter, as can be expected, on Jesus. Here again, M. Coulange goes right to the heart of the problem, and refuses to curry favour with that large crowd of "unbelievers," who, while in the very act of acclaiming unbelief, so often speak with more awe and admiration of Jesus, than of God. At the outset he says that, "The divinity of Jesus, which is in the eyes of the believer a profound mystery, is no mystery at all for the historian." That is the proper, if blunt, way of dealing with the "Son of God." There is no mystery whatever about him for anyone who can shake off "the ghost of a God," look unbiassed into the question, and refuse to accept any conclusion forced on to him by the repeated reiteration of clerics and reverent "Rationalists."

It is to the credit of M. Coulange that, in spite of his clerical upbringing and his constant priestly duties, he is able so dispassionately to examine the theological Christ and show how inevitably he had to originate in the society which first discovered him, and slowly but surely deified him. The actual existence of a man Jesus he does not discuss. For, as has been repeatedly shown in the columns of this journal, it is the God Jesus, Christ Jesus, who is the hero of the Gospel romance. It is this conception—drawn, I was glad to see, from the Apocryphal gospels as well as the "canonical" ones—that M. Coulange

discusses with a wealth of illustration and comment intensely interesting and stimulating.

Let there be no mistake. Such a book as this is still necessary, a book which exposes the priestly, and therefore stupid, conception of God and Man, so long as such a vast wealthy organization like Christianity is still a tremendous power. To expose the hollowness of Christian theology is as necessary now as ever.

H. CUTNER.

## The Clergy and the Legal Profession

THERE is still perpetuated here in Sydney (N.S.W., Australia), the farce of holding, from year to year, special religious services for the members of the legal profession, to mark what is known as the beginning of the new law term. Those of the Anglican persuasion attend St. Andrew's Church, and adherents of the Catholic faith gather at St. Mary's Cathedral. Very much along the same lines are the addresses heard in both instances. A fair summary of their character is supplied in these words, uttered this year by the Bishop of Newcastle, at St. Andrew's Church: "It is a matter for public satisfaction that the custom has been established which brings judges and members of the legal profession to a service in church at the beginning of the law term. It is a valuable recognition of the fact that God rules in the affairs of men, and of the alliance between law and religion which it is vital to maintain."

From the remarks I am here about to make, I wish explicitly to exempt the judges.

They are not in the contending category, so to speak, within which come the solicitors and the barristers. It is not the function of the judges to serve the one party or the other in the cases that come before them. Their duty is to hear, fairly and impartially, the evidence submitted by both sides, and to pronounce in favour of the litigants deemed to be in the right. Nor have I ever heard it even suggested that an occupant of the bench, in this country, has departed from this strict, high-principled sense of justice.

But how different it is with solicitors and barristers! Let the Bishop of Newcastle talk, to his heart's content, about "the alliance between law and religion."

What does religion count where, say, a barrister is approached with a brief? He is presumed, of course, to take it up only if he feels that the justice of the matter lies with his client. But who for a moment believes in this fiction? The result is that he does his utmost to secure a win for his client—in some instances getting free a contemptible thief, or a foul, calculating murderer; and in others doing a grave, irreparable injustice to, it may be, a petitioner for divorce, or a man who is frustrated in seeking recovery of the payment or the property to which he is very legitimately entitled.

Briefly, upon the skill of the barrister—in his triumphs, however inequitable or ruinous to the other side—depends his advance in the profession, with the increasingly large fees he is able to command.

Exceptions there are, I readily admit, in the ranks of both solicitors and barristers. But the general truth of what I submit must be obvious to all. A victory—right or wrong—is the inherent principle of the legal profession. Not in any other calling—occupation or profession—is there the temptation, in return for the payment a client is prepared to make, to exert one's efforts for the guilty no less than the innocent. Therefore, a fitting thing it is that the churches should give the legal profession their blessings, and link the two—religion and the law—as God's joint, supreme gift to mankind!

Of course, the object of these services is easily explained.

On the one hand, the members of the legal profession seem to welcome, for its conventional value, the formal, public recognition by the church; and, on the other, the clergy are only too eager to make it appear that the Bible has the endorsement of so powerful a body as the representatives of the law. Certain it is that many of

the solicitors and barristers have not a shred of belief in the superstitious mummery in which they participate. Happily we find such services suffering a most humiliating jolt from within the profession itself—that is, in Judge Foster (Melbourne) being the President of the Rationalist Association in that city; and in the ex-President of that body being no less a personage than Sir John Latham, Federal Chief Justice—the highest judicial appointment in Australia.

What part, I would like to ask, does religion play in law—in short, in the regulating and ordering of our every-day affairs?

A drawn document, with the signatures thereto, is the proceeding in every business transaction. Not for an instant would one Christian be satisfied with merely the word of another Christian. For them, in common with non-Christians, the matter must be specified in black-and-white. Where, too, is the man who hesitates to commit a crime because of the Bible—the fear of heavenly anger, and punishment to come? No; from top to bottom the conditions under which we live are preserved—determined and governed—by our own appointed police and judges. Without these (or, with only the Bible as our guide and protector) the world would forthwith become a riot of pillage and slaughter.

Let it be frankly recognized that members of the legal profession, despite the specially-arranged benedictions of the church, are by no means less human than those in other phases of life.

I have no desire to cite instances in support of this statement. But I certainly was amused to read, in the same issue of the Sydney paper that contained the report of the services at St. Andrew's Church and St. Mary's Cathedral, the statement by a bankrupt that his trouble was partly due to his having given £6,800 for investment in real estate to a Sydney barrister. "No acknowledgment of the money was given," it was added; "and the barrister left for the United States—not having been heard of since."

Within the legal profession are "the black sheep" that are to be found in every other walk of life.

To take just one other case—more for its sardonic humour than anything else—there is in gaol in Sydney at the present moment a solicitor, Clegg by name, who got away with over £25,000 of his clients' funds; and on whose behalf there stepped into the witness-box, at the hearing of the charges, a cleric, who testified, in the way of good character, that the defaulter was both a Sunday-school teacher in his church and a devoutly religious man.

Away, then, with this canting, unctuous humbug about "the alliance between law and religion"; or that the law, with all it implies, is anything other than a wholly human institution—humanely devised, and humanely administered!

FRANK HILL.

Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.

## Correspondence

### THE TEACHING OF JESUS

#### TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—I hope I have never confused the teaching of the Church with the teaching of Jesus. My contention is, and for years has been, that it is the teaching of the gospel Jesus that has bemuddled the thinking, and lowered the social standards of Europe. He was a peasant and had a peasant's-outlook. The samples of his "teaching" submitted by Mr. Llewelyn Powys prove, to me at least, that it is Jesus who is at fault. Taking the sayings in the order chosen by Mr. Llewelyn Powys: "Let the dead bury their dead"—if the dead were the loved and respected to speak thus was an outrage. "The Publicans and the harlots go into the Kingdom of Heaven before you," may possibly have been a kindly admonition to keep out of such company. Or it may have been to convey (like the advertisements of some of the cheaper places of entertainment), that if only you will come in you can be sure of a "good time" as they

are not too particular how you behave. These ancient oracles can generally be read two ways. "God is love when considered with its full implications," which would include harvests, roses, sunsets, rolling seas and rippling rivers, as well as earthquakes, blizzards, cancer, consumption, widowhood and orphanhood, the wholesale murder of the Flood and Sodom and Gomorrah in the Old Testament and the murder at Calvary in the New Testament—with Hell when we are dead!!! spoil the words as a revelation of love; but as sarcasm those three words—God is love—are gems of purest ray serene, and when men are really civilized their repetition will be received with the loud laughter they so richly merit.

To the uninstructed and unthinking, "God" explains everything; but to the educated and trained thinker it explains nothing. God and Devil are the fictions of ignorance which kept men trembling and stagnating for centuries. One century of Freethinking scientific investigation has made nature our servant instead of our master.

"Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's," was merely a submission to the current political situation without any regard to its justice.

The claim of Jesus, "I and my Father are one," reduces to an absurdity the cry "My God my God, why hast thou forsaken me." It is, if genuine, the cry of one who finds his faith in his mission breaking in the hour of trial.

I cannot see that Jesus has done anything of the slightest value to human civilization; he has certainly retarded it.

E. C. SAPHIN.

#### SHELLS AS SATELLITES

SIR,—Mr. Russell appears to have missed the point of my letter of May 31, which was to expose the fallacy in the statement—made not by me but by the writer of the paragraph in a previous issue of the *Freethinker*—that "Sir Robert Hadfield had invented a gun firing a shell with a velocity of 1,200 miles per minute." Exception may be taken to Mr. Russell's implication that the projectile in question owes its superior penetrative power simply to the manner of its construction and the nature of its material. Just as an animal cannot effectively develop heavy horns for attack unless with such development it correlates powerful muscles for wielding its weapons, so the form and material of a projectile must be correlated with the type both of the explosive by which, and of the piece from which, it is propelled. I am sure Mr. Russell will agree that however advanced towards perfection of hardness and toughness of structure a projectile designed for the piercing of armour-plate may be, these attributes remain utterly useless without that *vis-viva* of translation and rotation which the gun and its charge alone can give.

CHARLES M. BEADNELL.

(Author of *Modern Bullets in War and Sport*).

#### "THE FOOL, HATH SAID"

SIR,—I have before me the *Freethinker* for June 7. Re the article on "The Fool Hath Said," I think it is quite possible to disbelieve (as I do) in there having been a man Jesus, and yet believe in a God, One Infinite Mind or Life-energy (there can only be one Infinite Life, as Dr. A. M. Fairbairn used to tell us, at Oxford, when I was there). *How, do you think, came the (1) stars (2) seeds, and (3) selves, in the evolution UPWARD, unless by the action of the One Life-giving-Life? True there is no Onlooking Father in a heaven above. That was only the picture—theology of a pre-scientific age: but God is in ALL aspiring souls now, emerging.*

GILBERT T. SADLER,

M.A. (Oxon.), B.A., I.L.B. (Lond.).

Both (the northern and southern Christians) read the same Bible and pray to the same God, and each invokes his aid against the other.—*Lincoln*.

## Obituary

ROBERT AIRD

We regret to announce the death of Mr. Robert Aird on June 7, at Dumfries Infirmary.

He was buried at Craigton Cemetery, and a Secular Service was read by Mr. Hamilton, the President of the Glasgow Branch.

Mr. Aird was active in the capacity of Asst. Librarian and Treasurer, and his constant presence at the book-stall will be missed by many, who stopped to discuss with him the literature which he was so competent and willing to explain.

Our sympathies are extended to his widow, and his daughter, Mrs. Whitefield, also the other members of his family.

## 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

#### INDOOR

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): Mrs. Mary Agnes Hamilton—"Is There a Woman's Point of View?"

#### OUTDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 6.30, Mr. H. S. Wishart—"Christ."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Mr. C. Tuson. Highbury Corner, 8.0, Mr. C. Tuson. South Hill Park, Monday, June 22, Mr. C. Tuson.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 6.30, Mr. E. C. Smith. Rushcroft Road, opposite Brixton Town Hall, Tuesday, June 23, Mr. C. Tuson. Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town, 8.0, Friday, June 26, Mrs. E. Grout.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Corner of Deanery Road, Water Lane, Stratford, E.): 7.0, Mr. P. Goldman.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.30, Sunday, Messrs. Bryant, Wood, Evans and Tuson. 6.30, Messrs. Saphin, Bryant, Wood, Evans, Tuson and Leacy. Wednesday, 7.30, Messrs. Wood, Bryant and Tuson. Thursday, 7.30, Mr. E. Saphin. Friday, 7.30, Mr. A. Leacy and others. *Freethinker* on sale at the Kiosk. Should be ordered in advance to avoid disappointment.

### COUNTRY

#### OUTDOOR.

BLACKBURN MARKET: 7.30, Thursday, June 25, Mr. J. Clayton.

BLYTH (Market Place): 7.0, Monday, June 22, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

BURNLEY MARKET: 7.30, Tuesday, June 23, Mr. J. Clayton.

CHESTER-LE-STREET (The Bridge): 8.0, Friday, June 19, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

COLNE (North Valley Road): 7.30, Monday, June 22, Mr. J. Clayton.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (The Mound, Edinburgh): 7.30, Saturday, June 20 until Friday, June 26, Mr. G. Whitehead will lecture each evening.

LUMB-IN-ROSENDALE: 7.30, Friday, June 19, Mr. J. Clayton.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Platt Fields): 3.0 and 7.0, Mr. J. Clayton (Burnley) will speak at both meetings.

PRESTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Preston Market Place): 7.30, Mr. F. Maughan (Bolton)—"Freethought and World Forces."

SEAHAM HARBOUR (Church Street): 8.0, Saturday, June 20, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SHEFFIELD (Barker's Pool): 7.30, Mr. E. V. Birkby.

SOUTH BANK: 7.0, Wednesday, June 24, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

STOCKTON (Market Cross): 7.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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

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