

THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED *by* CHAPMAN COHEN •

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Views and Opinions

Romanism and Freedom
THE publisher's announcement that *Roman Catholicism and Freedom*, by Dr. J. Cadoux, Professor of Church History in Mansfield College, Oxford (Independent Press, 5s.), is a timely and important book, is nearer the truth than are most such advertisements. It is timely because the danger of the growth of Roman Catholicism to freedom of thought can never be overstressed. And it is important because the statement of the case against the most obnoxious form of Christian belief is carefully drawn and well documented. But the book is also *significant*, and for a reason that I do not think Dr. Cadoux will appreciate. This is that the evils which Dr. Cadoux describes as arising from the Roman Church, are also, other things equal, the evils manifested by the Protestant Church, and, deeper still, are evils that are deeply imbedded in the very nature of religion. Roman Catholicism illustrates these evils more conspicuously and on a larger scale than Protestantism, because it has a much older history and has had greater opportunities for mischief. Of course, Protestants will no more agree with this than Roman Catholics will endorse Dr. Cadoux's indictment of their Church. But this onesidedness, this inability to recognize identity where religious beliefs are concerned, is one of the normal consequences of religion. Most people have some little knowledge of the advance in power, and probably in numbers, of the Roman Church in this country. But the majority need the facts of the situation to be brought together in the well-marshalled manner adopted by Dr. Cadoux in order thoroughly to appreciate the situation. The claim of the Church for a larger measure of State recognition and support is also well-known, as is its claim to full support for the complete maintenance of its schools. But the way the Church works to gain an influential control of the press, the boycott carried on against publishers and others, a knowledge of these and similar tactics will come as a

surprise to many. With regard to increase in numbers it is not possible to speak with as great certainty. As Dr. Cadoux says, the Church exaggerates its gains and underestimates its losses, and the Roman Church, like every other Christian Church, has never hesitated at lying when it had a purpose to serve. Dr. Cadoux does not deal with the extent to which the Roman Church is buying up land and property in this country, which I happen to know is going on at a rapid pace, but it is a subject worthy of attention. Still, Dr. Cadoux has written a useful and informing work, and it is to be commended to all.

* * *

Is it Pot and Kettle?

Those who read Dr. Cadoux's book will do so with interest, but I should like them to read it with judgment and discrimination. It is to help towards this end that I am pointing out at some length that what Roman Catholicism is, Protestantism, given the circumstances, would be. The will to persecute is one thing; the opportunity to persecute is another and a different thing. And the severity of the persecution when it occurs is determined by the restraints that contemporary circumstances place on its indulgence. Even a Hitler will not be as bad as others when circumstances prevent his being as bad as he would like to be.

Dr. Cadoux has for a title to one of his chapters, "Were Protestants as Bad?" His reply is they were not, but the reply is quite unconvincing. He admits that religious toleration was not one of the tenets of the "great Reformers of the sixteenth century, and did not become a 'characteristic' of Protestantism until nearly two hundred years after the break with Rome." It is usually the case that the characteristics of a movement are exhibited in its earlier stages, and it is only after continued contact with other movements and forces that they assume other characteristics. It is indeed remarkable if it took two hundred years for so important a characteristic as toleration to show itself in Protestantism, and then only after it had been brought into contact with other heretical influences, with the growing secularization of life, with a larger measure of control exerted over religious organizations by the secular powers, and with the general influence of the broadening of man's conception of the world under the impulse of a scientific renaissance. If general history plays any part in the education of a Professor of Church history, or if Church history has any influence on broadening the mental outlook, one would have expected Dr. Cadoux to have got much nearer some basic truths than he has.

Let me cite as evidence of the relation of Protestantism to persecution the historian Lecky, who is as anxious as any self-respecting historian can be to put the best possible aspect of Christianity, Catholic or Protestant, before his readers:—

The Protestant persecutions were never so sanguinary as those of the Catholics, but the principle was affirmed quite as strongly, was acted on as constantly, and was defended quite as pertinaciously by the clergy. In Germany, at the protestation of Spire, when the name of Protestant was assumed, the Lutheran princes absolutely prohibited the celebration of mass within their dominions. In England a similar measure was passed as early as Edward VI. On the ascension of Elizabeth, and before the Catholics had given any signs of discontent, a law was made prohibiting any religious service other than the prayer book; the penalty for the third offence being imprisonment for life, while another law imposed a fine on anyone who abstained from the Anglican service. The Presbyterians through a long succession of reigns were imprisoned, branded, mutilated, scourged, and exposed in the pillory. Many Catholics under false pretences were tortured and hung. Anabaptists and Arians were burnt alive. In Ireland the religion of the immense majority of the people was banned and proscribed. . . . In Scotland, during nearly the whole period that the Stuarts were on the throne of England, a persecution rivalling in atrocity almost any on record was directed by the English Government at the instigation of the Scotch Bishops, and with the approbation of the English Church against all who repudiated Episcopacy. If a conventicle was held in a house, the preacher was liable to be put to death. If it was held in the open-air, both minister and people incurred the same fate. The Presbyterians were hunted like criminals over the mountains. Their ears were torn from the roots. They were branded with hot irons. Their fingers were wrenched asunder by the thumbkings. The bones of their legs were shattered in the boots. Women were scourged publicly through the streets. . . . "One mass," exclaimed Knox, "is more fearful to me than if 10,000 armed enemies were landed in any part of the realm." In France, when the government of certain towns was conceded to the Protestants, they immediately employed their power to suppress absolutely the Catholic worship. . . . In Sweden all who dissented from any article in the Confession of Augsburg were at once banished. . . . In Protestant Switzerland numerous Anabaptists perished by drowning. . . . In America, the colonists who were driven from their own land by persecution, not only proscribed the Catholics, but also persecuted the Quakers—the most inoffensive of all sects—with atrocious severity. . . . The right of the civil magistrate to punish heresy was maintained by the Helvetic, Scottish, Belgic and Saxon Confessions.

And of a form of apology for Protestant persecution, to which Dr. Cadoux shows a certain favour, Lecky says:—

Nothing can be more erroneous than to represent it as merely a weapon which was employed in a moment of conflict, or as the outburst of a natural indignation, or as the unreasoning observance of an old tradition. Persecution among the early Protestants was a distinct and definite doctrine, digested into elaborate treatises, indissolubly connected with a large portion of the received theology, developed by the most enlightened and far-seeing theologians, and enforced against the most inoffensive as against the most formidable sects. It was the doctrine of the palmiest days of Protestantism. It was taught by those who are justly esteemed the greatest of its leaders.

In some respects the savage intolerance of Protestant sects was even less excusable than was that of the older Church. As both Lecky and, I think, Froude pointed out, the Roman Church was an organization that had behind it a lengthy history, it spoke with the voice of established authority, and was fighting to retain its position and its power. But Protestantism when it began to persecute was a thing of yesterday. It had no history of its own to which

to appeal, it had no established position to defend, no authority, save that which religion has in all ages supplied for the exercise of many of the worst elements of human nature, to justify its intolerance. Protestantism, in everything that was bad, followed the example of the older Church. If its intolerance was on the whole less persistent, or its persecution less brutal, if it is possible to cite Protestant writers who took a more humane view of religious difference, this cannot be placed to the credit of Protestantism itself. Not only as Dr Cadoux admits, is it true that the "great Reformers" did not stand for intellectual liberty, they denounced it in unmeasured terms. Whatever degree of intellectual freedom followed the rise of Protestantism was due to the circumstances amid which it arose and the circumstances that followed its triumph. The revolt against Rome took place in various countries, and on different grounds. It had for its foundation different interpretations of the Bible, hatred of the greediness and the wealth of the Church, and its character as feudal lord. It had also as a background the influence of the intellectual Renaissance, based not on Christianity, but upon the revival of Pagan philosophy and the impact of Mohammedan culture. All these things combined to make a unity, such as Rome had been striving to establish, a sheer impossibility. And in all ages Freedom has profited as much from the divisions among its enemies as it has from the loyalty of its friends. Even to-day it is highly probable that if the Christian bodies could come to a general working agreement, there would be short shrift for enlightened thinking and freedom of expression. Finally, it is to Protestantism that we have to look for the establishment of a State Church, which served to equate heresy with treason, which was responsible for the wars of religion and for the setting back of intellectual progress for nearly two centuries. The liberal movement that was taking place *inside* the Roman Church, and which might have led to its disintegration, stopped. The Protestant reformation did not reform men in the direction of greater liberality of thought, it did give unprovable, and often non-understandable doctrines a place of supreme importance in life, and helped to reform the Roman Church to an extent that enabled her to secure a stronger lease of life than it otherwise would have had.

Dr. Cadoux remarks incidentally that it was the "growing liberality of English Protestantism that led to the repeal of certain anti-Catholic laws." That is not the case. Liberal legislation with regard to freedom of thought on religion, whenever it was not something that assisted this or that sect, was opposed by Protestants with all their strength. The ferocious statute law of Blasphemy, a law so ferocious that it has never been put into force, the prosecution of Freethinkers having been left to the more pliable Common Law, was passed at the end of the seventeenth century; and the imprisonment and punishment of Freethinkers and heretics went on merrily right through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The development of commerce, the broadening of men's views of the world, consequent on more exact geographical and ethnological knowledge, the multiplication of religious sects, these and other things contributed to break down the rigour of religious intolerance. Intolerance became less easy of practice from the multiplication of those who could be brought within its play. On any logical or consistent effort at general and sustained persecution the number of people who would qualify for imprisonment or death became too great to be comfortably handled. As someone said Christians ceased burning heretics only when the heretics became strong enough to object.

The Protestant Church did what it could while it could to perpetuate religious persecution. It made new laws against heresy and against Freethinkers, against freedom of speech and freedom of publication, and in a following article we shall see that it does to-day as much as its divided state will enable it to do. We owe much to the forces that brought the Protestant churches into existence, even though they fought hard against giving to others the freedom they claimed for themselves. But religious intolerance, whether Catholic or Protestant, has to deal with circumstances as it may, and the same set of conditions that created the Protestant movement did something to mitigate sustained Christian intolerance. Still there is no more a liberal Protestantism, *per se*, than there is a liberal Roman Catholicism *per se*. There is only a number of religious bodies that cannot agree on a common policy of persecution, and who are ultimately compelled to give way to liberalizing and civilizing influences no Church can completely destroy.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(To be continued)

A Word to the Wise

"Ignorance, even when associated with religion, is still ignorance, and the man who follows such teaching does as much mischief as a criminal, for he is equally an enemy of society."—*Anatole France*.

"If we do not wish our own democracy to go to fossil we must keep it alive, fresh, and progressive."
Havelock Ellis.

It has been pointed out repeatedly in these columns that the Freethought Movement suffers from a boycott which is applied by Christians in the newspaper press, booksellers' and newsagents' shops, and at the municipal and private libraries. With a few exceptions, Freethought publications are ignored in the former, and kept out of the latter. Hence, it becomes increasingly necessary that every Freethinker should assist activity in the propagation of the literature of the Movement. Christian organizations spend annually tens of thousands of pounds in furtherance of their Oriental faith, and, incidentally, no small part of their propaganda is the vilification and misrepresentation of Freethought. A glance at the capacious catalogues of the publications of such organizations as the Religious Tract Society, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, the Christian Evidence Society, the Catholic Truth Society, and the numerous publishers who cater for the many-headed Orthodox public, will be sufficient to show how complete are their methods, and how large is their success. These books, periodicals, pamphlets, and leaflets, are distributed throughout the English-speaking world, and they penetrate into countless homes where Freethought works are never seen, and seldom heard of.

The clergy, of whom there are 40,000 in this country, are past-masters at circumventing any movement likely to prove dangerous to their faith, and they have rare noses for heresy. They are as clever as any politicians, and just as tricky. The original Sunday schools were initiated by laymen with the sole and laudable idea of imparting elementary education to really poor children on the one day in the week on which, prior to the passing of the Factory Acts, they were free to receive it. Nowadays, the Sunday schools are not concerned with other than purely theological instruction, and the average Sunday-School teacher is not concerned with secular education. Similarly with the Public Library Movement, which was initiated with the idea of

bringing educational and informative literature within the reach of the poorest citizen. The clergy have obtained great influence on the local committees of these libraries, and their one and constant aim is to render such institutions, from their narrow and sectarian point of view, entirely harmless and innocuous. So long as the library shelves are stocked with the harmless volumes of the industrious purveyors of "the smooth tale, generally of love," the salaried Sons-of-God are quite content. The instant any attempt is made to place before the reading public any works which make for sanity or ordered thought, they at once display their animosity. The boycott is introduced, with the result that the modern *Index Expurgatorius* contains the names of almost every author who is worth reading, from Bernard Shaw to H. G. Wells. Few of the "Intellectuals" escape the net, and Robert Blatchford suffers in the company of Maxim Gorky, Eugène Brieux, and Ernst Haeckel.

With the view of combating this reprehensible state of affairs, Freethinkers should bestir themselves. They should ask for definite Freethought publications at the libraries they use, and see that they are supplied. An excellent beginning could be made with Foote's *Shakespeare*, and with Mr. Chapman Cohen's books, and other volumes issued by the Pioneer Press, etc. In extreme cases, the books might be presented to the library, but care must be taken that the books are catalogued, and not placed on a top shelf and quietly forgotten. So far as pamphlets are concerned, it is, perhaps, better to hand them, or post them, to likely readers. Orthodox persons are often interested in controversial literature, and such introduction often means that regular readers of Freethought publications are obtained. Remembering that, in spite of a most rigorous boycott, thousands of pamphlets are already in circulation, it must be apparent that, with the additional publicity, these figures may be increased in the near future. More literature should be sold at all indoor and open-air meetings, and the sale entrusted as much as possible to the ladies associated with the Freethought Movement, who will thus find a further outlet for their energies.

With regard to the *Freethinker* itself, it is useful to order that paper with other publications, so that the tradesman is faced with the dilemma of accepting or refusing a good customer. Another timely suggestion is for Freethinkers to join in any likely discussion in local papers. These organs often give far more space to readers' opinions than the large Metropolitan newspapers. Letters should be short, strictly to the point, and courteous, and should be written on one side of the paper only, and authenticated with the name and address of the sender, not necessarily for publication. If some of these hints are acted upon by our readers, it should prove of benefit to the Movement.

Freethinkers must see to it that Freethought publications get far more publicity, and at once. Humility is a rare and fragrant virtue, but "Intellectuals" cannot surrender their rights at the behests of a clerical vested interest, however wealthy. Freethought is a far wider and nobler evangel than any subsidized superstition. It has its roots in intellectual necessity, and, deeper still, in ethical right. It is based on the psychological law of human development, only apprehended for ages by a few choice spirits, but latterly taking on a new significance and a fresh urgency. Perpetually reaffirmed from generation to generation by unnumbered examples of unselfish martyrdom, from the days of Hypatia to those of Ferrer, it is to-day changing the direction and character of the ideas of the civilized world.

There are ominous signs of a recrudescence of bigotry, and it is clearly the duty and the interest of

every member of the Freethought Party to extend its usefulness. There is no better way than by increasing the publicity of the Movement, and drawing attention to Freethought advocacy. There was never a time when it was more necessary to resist the tyrannous tendencies of the times, and if Freethinkers wish to fight Medievalism on more equal terms they must progress. Part of the mission of Freethought is to enlarge the mental horizons of mankind. This is in itself a most worthy object; for mankind, as a whole, thinks but slowly. It was the power of this message that animated the Freethought pioneers. They never compromised, either with themselves or their opponents, nor sought popularity, nor were false to the fiery vision and conviction that sustained them. It is our bounden duty to extend their work.

MIMNERMUS.

Rome's Legacy to the Eastern Empire

THE Byzantine Empire was founded in 395 A.D., when, at his death, the Roman Emperor Theodosius allotted the Eastern and Western divisions of the State to his sons Arcadius and Honorius. The Roman State had previously been separated into two parts temporarily, but this division proved permanent.

The overthrow of ancient Rome was one of the most tragic events in human history. The barbarian invasions, the evil influences of an Eastern cult, with the sad decline in earlier Pagan virility, were chiefly responsible for this calamity. In place of the orderly Government of Rome, anarchy reigned supreme for generations, and unspeakable misery was the lot of the masses of the people in Western Europe.

Yet, the Eastern Empire with its capital at Byzantium or Constantinople managed to weather the storm and survived for centuries to come. Favoured by its geographical position and with its military defences modelled on Roman lines, it withstood the onslaughts of the barbarian tribes. Its loss of its Danubian, Syrian, African and Western Provinces proved a blessing in disguise, as Byzantium was thus enabled to concentrate its energies within narrower territory. When compared with the rest of Europe, its culture was superior in character, and this greater refinement helped to humanize the rude barbarism which now dwelt among the ruins of the fallen Western Empire.

Byzantine monarchs fully realized the primary importance of agriculture, and the cultivation of the soil was earnestly encouraged. But this was a Roman heritage, and as soldiers were indispensable for defensive purposes, many provincial colonies were founded in which they raised crops. Also, adjacent peoples such as Armenians, Turks and Asiatic Greeks were settled within the Empire's colonies as labourers on the land, and by the tenth century the Eastern State had become the most populated region in Europe.

The Government supervised husbandry, and it was decreed that landed proprietors who neglected to cultivate their domains thereby forfeited them. Then a tax was imposed on all owners of arable land, and this impost weighed so heavily on unproductive acres that landholders soon brought them under cultivation. Still, the agricultural prosperity which ensued was far less due to State interference than to the civil and military settlements. As Prof. Boissonade, the French historian, remarks in his *Life and Work in Medieval Europe*: "Very soon cultivation produced such great benefits in the now peaceful Em-

pire that the State, the great and small landowners, all set themselves with equal ardour to reap the fruits thereof. After periods of depression the Empire did indeed, especially from the eighth to the eleventh century, reach a remarkable height of prosperity, more particularly in Thrace, Macedonia, Greece and Southern Italy." For at last the East had revived the methods of Pagan agriculture. Treatises on scientific farming were composed; the art of irrigation was restored; vineyards and farms became common while rural administration was projected.

The provinces were well wooded, fine parks abounded, and good timber was plentiful for building purposes. Fisheries flourished, and sheep, pig and cattle-raising was intensified. In fact the adjacent possessions of Byzantium became the richest corn-fields in Europe. The fruits of the South: oranges, lemons, figs and raisins, were grown for home consumption and export abroad. The wines of Sicily and Greece were everywhere relished while Byzantium successfully cultivated the sugar cane, cotton, mulberries and medicinal plants. Indeed, its arts, handicrafts and luxuries reposed, as all civilized life ultimately reposes, on the products of the soil.

Yet, there developed a dark blot on the fair landscape. The common lands diminished, while the estates of the large landowners and the clergy grew from more to more, and these orders became opulent largely at the expense of the general agrarian community.

During the Middle Ages, the Greek Church devotely enlarged its landed possessions. Lavish grants from priest-ridden Emperors were chiefly responsible for this aggrandisement. Then the piety, and even more, the fears of the faithful, munificent gifts of territorial magnates and the systematic invasion of the rights of communes and defenceless small proprietors added substantially to clerical wealth. A priestly horde embracing the patriarchs, "the fifty-seven metropolitan sees, the forty-nine archbishops, the fifty-four bishoprics, the innumerable convents, chapels, oratories, churches—nay, even the simple "lauras" or hermitages—benefited by this immense extension of ecclesiastical possessions, to which were attached exorbitant privileges, and which were exempt from part of the State charges, untransferable and inalienable. The Church was even adroit enough to obtain for itself the right of levying dues (canons) in money or in kind from the peasants. Its fortune grew without remission, and if it was sometimes employed to support the work of religious propaganda, charity, or progress in the arts and sciences, it served more often still to favour the luxury and idleness of a caste, which pleaded the rules of its Order to avoid manual labour." (Boissonade, p. 36).

As the Church waxed in wealth and power its arrogance and fanaticism became intolerable. Immune from taxation which severely oppressed the civil population, while also evading military obligations the sacerdotal order became a menace to the secular authorities. The more statesmanlike rulers were fully aware of the perils lurking in a theocratic body so generously endowed with landed estate, and tried to minimize the danger. Gifts of real property to monks and clerks were forbidden; the clergy were occasionally compelled to restore stolen or illegitimately acquired estates, and it was attempted by means of taxation or transfer to break up unduly opulent clerical demesnes.

Yet despite these well-meant efforts to lessen the dictatorial powers of the clergy, the Crown was in the long run compelled to conciliate a caste which held the populace in superstitious subjection, and the Church retained possession of the greater part of the soil. The wealth of the sacerdotal order seems almost

incredible as also the multitude of priests, monks and prelates who lived in luxurious ease at the cost of the toiling community. Among countless religious houses, one alone, the Abbey of Monte Cassino possessed valuable estates which extended throughout all Southern Italy.

Coincidentally with the expansion of Church property, there evolved vast estates possessed by a privileged aristocracy. Through intermarriage, purchase and ruthless encroachment on communal land the small proprietors were impoverished or reduced to beggary. The Emperors grew alarmed at the rapid growth of these immense landed properties, whose domineering owners became a serious menace to the Empire. The Isaurian and Macedonian monarchs endeavoured to stay the widespread alienation of small landed properties by force of law, but with little permanent success. Under weak religious Emperors the aristocracy regained what they had surrendered under strong ones, and although the feudal system was not established to the extent of that in Western Europe in the early Middle Ages, the territorial lords obtained autocratic authority over their domains, and exercised sovereign sway over the peasant population. Ultimately, the landed class usurped so many powers and privileges, owned so many slaves and possessed so much wealth that they virtually governed the State.

Naturally, the free peasants and small proprietors struggled to preserve their possessions, but the aristocracy and the Church proved victors in the end. The minor landowners and holders of military benefices became more and more dependent to the territorial magnates. The conflict was a protracted one, but in the eleventh century the free peasantry had been generally reduced to pauperism through the burdens of taxation, never-ceasing intimidation, lack of credit, inclement seasons and the demands of their creditors. Yet all the proud boasts of heraldry and power, all the luxury, refinement and wealth of the Eastern Empire, which was probably without parallel in the outside world, rested mainly on the poverty-stricken men who cultivated the soil, while these labourers remained destitute of all intellectual outlook, subsisted on the meanest fare, and saw no prospect of any improvement in their earthly condition. Their sole consolation was a chance of eternal felicity in another and a better world if they believed and obeyed the pastors and masters appointed by Providence to rule over them.

T. F. PALMER.

Four Nature Epigrams

1
 Would you love the changing weather
 In all its forms?—
 Take courage from the gorse and heather,
 Essence of sun . . . and storms!

2
 Did not the willows quiver and sway,
 How should we know,
 The threatening weir o'er yonder lay,
 To suck us down below?

3
 By every bud that grows,
 The pointed thorn we see:
 So live that there shall be,
 No thorn without its rose.

4
 Write not: Both fame and fortune he achieved,
 And to his spirit Sorrow was denied;
 Write: Life was sweeter, just because he lived,
 And Death less dreadful, just because he died.
 Onitsha, Nigeria. J. M. STUART YOUNG.

A Plea for a Common Front

(Continued from page 390)

Now let us glance at Dialectical Materialism. The critic says: Define this creed or philosophy or whatever it is; name a treatise in which its system is set forth. At once one has to say that there is no such treatise; and the critic is confirmed in his belief that he is dealing with a chimera. But Dialectical Materialism is not a system except in so far as life is a system. But who dare say: Define life, define the system in some finally conclusive axioms. Dialectical Materialism is an attempt to grasp scientifically the world (including man) in all its fullness. In the last resort it is therefore as wide as all genuine knowledge and realization.

That is, of course, a basis too wide for exposition. We have to start from somewhere. We have to catch hold of portions of life (what Prof. Levy calls "isolates"). But the moment we forget that these portions belong to a larger whole, we cease to be dialectical. The dialectic resides precisely in the sense that one is dealing with a portion of a living, moving whole—that the portion is itself changing all the while in terms of that whole.

It is because Marx and Engels were the first to grasp their fruitful conception that they were able to anticipate the whole development of modern science—relativity, psychoanalysis with its ambivalent unconscious, etc. :—

With remarkable insight Engels says: "The so-called constants of physics are for the most part nothing but designations of the nodal points where quantitative addition or withdrawal of motion calls forth a qualitative change in the state of the body in question." We are now only beginning to appreciate the essential justice of these remarks and the significance of such nodal points. The whole theory of such quanta depends, like the theory of acoustic vibrations with which it has formal relations, on the distribution of nodes which mark out two qualitatively and quantitatively different states of vibration.

This quotation is from a pamphlet by J. D. Bernal, Assistant Director of Research in Crystallography in the University of Cambridge. I recommend this pamphlet; it is indeed a hopeful sign when a brilliant research-scientist grasps the social problem. Let those uninformed jeerers at Marxism read what Bernal, an unimpeachable authority, has to say on the qualifications of Engels as a scientist.

One more quotation on this aspect of dialectics—since it is an aspect so distorted by the jeerers :—

Engels, as a Dialectical Materialist, although he lived at a time of the unrestricted predominance of Newtonian physics, always characterized space and time as the *forms of the existence of matter*. Einsteinian physics, which brings space and time into the closest dependence on matter, only justifies here, without having any suspicion of it, what Dialectical Materialism has always maintained, viz., the closest dialectical unity between matter, movement, space and time.³

It will be seen then that Dialectical Materialism, providing a sure grasp on the concrete concept of movement, action, reality, enables its professors to

³ *Dialectical Materialism and Communism*, by I. Rudas (6d.). Bernal's pamphlet is *Engels and Science* (2d.). Both pamphlets published by Labour Monthly. These will serve as preparations for Engels' *Anti-Dühring*, and Ludwig Feuerbach, and Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. *Out of the Night*, by Prof. H. J. Muller ("one of the world's leading biologists," Haldane) is worth reading for its exposition that the fruitful development of science now depends on the advent of Communism.

perceive the tendencies of the future (both in general science as well as in sociology) by means of a clear realization of the problems of the moment.

Since dialectics recognizes that the object of analysis is not an abstract object, but part of a living whole, it treats the object as real only in so far as it is alive, evolving. The object partakes of movement, energy; it is ceaselessly transforming itself, disintegrating, merging into a new unity. It must, therefore, possess an internal conflict; it is simultaneously a discord and a harmony; it is alive, it is dying, and it is seeking to transform itself into a new form of life. From this simple organic basis of its necessity derive the laws of dialectics, which are so mocked at by people who will not take the trouble to inquire what they mean—quantity changed into quality, fusion of opposites, etc.

It is the phrasing of these laws that provides a stumbling-block for the beginner, for those who approach dialectics from the viewpoint of a formal static logic. Thus it seems ridiculous to be told that becoming is "being and not-being at the same time," and that all movement in nature or society will conform to this law. But that is only because the statement is imagined to mean that the object of analysis is made up of so much being and so much not-being as a draught-board of black and white squares. Such an interpretation lands us at once in impossibility. "If we were to rest on only half of a phrase, either motion would disappear or the object itself." (Adoratsky). But the terms must be understood dynamically—as we understand positive and negative electricity. In organism the being and not-being, the progressive and the regressive elements, are inextricably merged.

Throughout nature and society we find the fusion of opposites creating a new unity. That is the whole basis of action, as appears once we analytically grasp the living fact. The "new thing" is what dialectics calls quality, though, of course, it also involves a quantitative basis; and this law of quality continually emerging from quantities is of the greatest importance once we turn to the analysis of humanity. All social development involves a re-shuffling of relationships; the development of the productive mechanism continually leaps into a "new quality," where human relationships take on new values and meanings; and when the conflicts of opposites, the creation of contradictions, reaches an extreme point of tension, we have revolution. It is no use saying that you prefer progress as a nice pleasant straight line; it is much better to face facts and do your best to aid the "new quality" into existence as rapidly, and therefore with as little dislocation, as possible. Dislocation there is sure to be; but even so, the sufferings caused by the dislocation will be infinitely less than the sufferings caused by the increasing contradiction.

Before we come to society, however, a few more words on the general dialectical attitude. The obscurantists try to confuse the dialectical teaching on development. The dialectical attitude is purely Materialist; it has only one dogma—that the material world exists. All the rest is purely scientific deduction from facts. "It is a philosophical theory derived entirely from practice: from nature and history." (Rudas). "There is no abstract truth, truth is concrete." (Lenin). "With me the idea is nothing else than the material reflected by the human mind and translated into forms of thought." (Marx).

Dialectics has therefore nothing in common with such disguised idealisms as Vitalism. And since the dialectical analysis applies to thinking as much as to

chemistry or economics, the efforts to pin Materialism down to a physico-chemical analysis (as made by all the "opponents" of Materialism) simply have no relevance. This latter type of "Materialism," which we may call mechanistic, is not really a Materialism at all, but a kind of disguised Monism with all the irrationalities of any other form of Monism; abstract matter, the idea or mind, or God do equally well. Abstract matter and the illusion of mind is no different from abstract mind and the illusion of matter. To attempt to explain thinking in terms of physico-chemical processes is as ridiculous as it would be to attempt to reduce solid geometry to plane geometry. Plane is included in solid, but not vice versa.⁴

Dialectical Materialism is then the finally-embracing scientific attitude. As such it covers the whole of human experience, and at last dislodges religion and metaphysics. The claims of the latter have been based on the fact that science was a set of compartmented analyses, unrelated and abstracted from life in its fullness, from the concrete concept of development which breaks down all compartments. The reactionary could therefore argue that something other than science was needed to pull the whole lot together—mind, the idea, God. But once the dialectical concept of movement is grasped, there are no gaps left at all. There are still, of course, gaps in our actual knowledge, but no gaps in our attitude towards reality, no chasm requiring the *saltus dei*.

Bernal, the practising scientist, vouches:—

We have through Dialectical Materialism a greater comprehension of whole processes, which before were seen only in parts. But it is not only in these general, almost philosophical aspects of science that Engels' work is of value. In everyday work, those who take the trouble to follow Engels' hints find themselves more able to grasp the detailed connexions of special investigation. The function of Dialectical Materialism is not to take the place of scientific method, but to supplement it by giving indications of directions in what hopeful solutions may be looked for. As Uranovsky says in *Marxism and Modern Thought*: "The dialectic of nature is a method of the investigation and understanding of nature. This conception of nature is founded on the application of Materialist dialectic to the data of science as they are obtained at each given historical moment. The dialectic brings no artificial connexions into nature, and does not solve problems by substituting itself for the natural sciences. It helps in critically understanding and connecting facts already obtained, it points out the paths of further investigation and fearlessly poses uninvestigated problems."

The need for a dialectical understanding can be exemplified from statements made by Prof. Julian Huxley. Huxley is far more "literate" than most scientists; and therefore when we find he is capable of the most reactionary and perplexed utterance, we realize how extraordinarily irrational a scientist without a dialectical viewpoint can become. Huxley takes the poisonous attitude that religion has a supra-scientific eyrie and that it harmonizes the findings of science! Could anything be more peculiarly untrue! Huxley actually declares:—

⁴ Mr. Chapman Cohen in his doughty defences of Materialism against the mathematical mystics, in his squashing of the Vitalist, C. E. M. Joad, or in his excellent book, *Materialism Re-stated* (1927), never falls into any of the errors indicated above. He keeps stoutly to the true Materialist basis; but he halts at the point where the question is asked. What is the law governing the development of matter when it transforms itself? He moves towards the dialectical position, as must any true Materialist; and though only the slightest further step is needed to bring him full into the middle of the dialectical position, yet it is needed. May he yet add that chapter to his *Materialism Re-stated!*

The mysticism of some modern philosophies is due to a reaction against the aridity of a world without values, against the complacent over-simplification of science or of materialistic philosophy.

JACK LINDSAY.

(To be continued)

Double Dutch

THE Prague Congress has caused grave misgivings to develop in the mind of a Dutch Member of Parliament, Heer de Marchand et d'Ansembourg.

Now Freethought in Holland is in something the same position as in England. True that a Dutch friend assured me that there were so many Freethinkers in Holland that they did not join the Dageraad, the Freethought Society; but I think he was exaggerating. In Holland Protestant Christianity prevails, and it is the convention, as in England, to pretend that every one is a Christian, goes to church, if only once in a lifetime, and is shocked by Atheism.

On April 21 this deputy (M.P.) asked the Minister of Justice whether he had heard of a Congress of Godless at Prague, which had established a union of all bodies propagating Atheism, in order to engage in a new war against religion, which was to be the greatest attack on Christianity that had ever taken place. This campaign had been planned at a series of meetings in France, Switzerland, Holland, Czechoslovakia and Belgium. It was to be the result of the combination of the International Union of Freethinkers, which attacks religion by scientific means, and the Proletarian Freethinkers who take their orders from Moscow. In view of this formidable amalgamation, what was the Minister of Justice going to do for the protection of Christianity in Holland?

Heer de Marchand perceptibly shakes in his shoes. We can hear his metatarsal bones clattering on the other side of the North Sea. Note to whom the question is addressed; To the Minister of Justice. The law is to be called in to suppress this odious menace of Freethought. Any such law as our Blasphemy Laws, any remnant of despotism which has been left in the statute book, ought to be made use of against these anti-Christians. Better still, take a leaf out of the book of those neighbours, the Nazis, and arrest the leaders for embezzling their own funds. Then you confiscate their funds and imprison the leaders. In addition accuse them of the most revolting crimes and habits known to man, and put them in prison for those as well. Pick their pockets and discredit them. That is the way to deal with Atheists—Gassolini knows how to do them down. And this Christian gentleman would like to see the Minister of Justice take action in Holland too.

English Freethinkers who say to themselves complacently that things like that will never happen in England should enquire what is happening in Ireland, both in the Free (?) State and in Ulster.

Perhaps you will reply, dear reader, that this is all scare talk. We will leave it at that and pass on to another view of the matter. Is it correct that the International Union of Freethinkers has gone "red," not a pale Socialist pink, but real Bolshevik blood red? Is the International going to take orders from Moscow?

The reply is that the International Union remains politically colourless, or, if you will, it includes all colours. Just as the National Secular Society does not inquire into the political tenets of its members, similarly all Freethinkers are welcome at the Congresses of the International Union without any distinction of political creed. The Union of Proletarian Freethinkers has only been accepted because it has abandoned, as far as work in the fold of the International Union is concerned, its political bias.

Freethought has One political Aim, that of Freedom of Thought, Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Assembly, a Trinity of Liberty. When and where such Liberty is menaced, Freethought becomes a politically active body. In little Luxemburg, in greater Czechoslovakia, the Freethought organizations, in each country

politically "colourless," decided to take political action to safeguard the Trinity of Liberty. In each case they have acted swiftly and efficiently. The result is that masses formerly indifferent, or indifferently pious, have become active Freethinkers. In neither case have any orders been taken from Moscow, not even money-orders.

No, the International Union gave a warm welcome and some heated criticism to the Proletarian Freethinkers. The criticism was well received—Dr. Galperine admitted that his association had been too narrow in its outlook, and "avait fait des bêtises," had acted stupidly. The Russians, it must be admitted, did give us something. That was a glass of vodka, which, as friend Bayard Simmons will tell you, is a drink for poets, and not for

C. BRADLAUGH BONNER.

Acid Drops

Now that the Government has achieved its unavowed purpose of preventing the League of Nations being encouraged to interfere in the imperialistic aims of any country—a habit that might have rather disagreeable repercussions where this country is concerned—and has, in effect, laid down the moral rule that successful brigandage must stand on a level with rightful acquisition, it is only fitting that the gravity of the state of the League should be emphasized by the Archbishop of Canterbury asking that prayers should be offered up, on June 21 and 28, for the League of Nations. It is always when the patient is nearing death that prayer is resorted to.

It is perhaps unfair to suggest that the Government wishes to *kill* the League of Nations. What it evidently wishes is to restrict it to united action against illegal trafficking in drugs, etc., and might even agree to it taking action against any small State in other matters—where the State in question is not likely to hit back. We feel sure that Mr. Baldwin and Mr. Eden would be the first to take a very firm stand if, say, Monte Carlo or the Isle of Man were to issue an ultimatum directed against this country.

We have no doubt that honest Christians with a remnant of common sense, must sometimes have wondered why God permitted the Christian Italians to fall on the Christian Abyssinians, and butcher women and children in first class style, and also moved the heart of the British Government so that it should delay the Abyssinians getting arms enough to offer an effective resistance to the Italians. Now the Rev. F. C. Spurr has given an explanation:—

Why had God not stopped Mussolini? God could stop him to-morrow, but in doing so he would have deprived humanity of that free-will which made it human.

Now that must be very comforting to the Abyssinians. When the Abyssinian mother looks on her child that has been blinded with mustard gas, or the Abyssinians saw non-combatants and wounded men deliberately bombed by Italian airmen, who were not taking greater risks than a motorist does when he goes for a drive, they may have said, all this is because God gave us free-will. Gave the Italians the free-will to attack us, gave Britain and France the free-will to see that the Italians were not seriously interfered with, gave Mr. Eden, the fearless Sir Rupert de Geneva, to sell himself for a post, and Mr. Baldwin the free-will to give in to gain an election, and then eat his promises when it was safe for him to do so. Thank God for Free-will!

Glancing again at the report of Mr. Spurr's speech in the *Chester Chronicle*, we find the speaker said that the state of the world was due to man's damnable greed, his ineptitude, his selfishness, and his *woodenheadedness*. The italics are ours, and if the words italicized do not explain why the Abyssinians were butchered and their land stolen, it certainly explains Mr. Spurr's apology.

The *Evening News* and its Sunday Brother, the *Sunday Dispatch*, "hopes that Mr. Baldwin will effect a working alliance between himself, Hitler and Mussolini," because this is the only bar to the advance of Communism. Hitler and Mussolini, with, of course, Rothermere and Baldwin, thus become the saviours of Europe. Well, in making and breaking solemn promises we agree that Baldwin and Eden are rapidly qualifying for admission to the warm friendship of Hitler and Mussolini. And in the manufacturing of misleading news, the Rothermere press can learn nothing from either Italy or Germany. Baldwin and Eden have yet to qualify as experts in the use of Castor Oil and rubber truncheons, and ultimately, if they are to stand worthily by the side of Mussolini and Hitler, they will have to study the morality of imprisoning women for the escape of their men-folk—as in Italy, and starving old people and children to death, as in Germany. Still, everyone has the capacity of learning—and lying.

We should say that the Communists will thank the clumsiness of Rothermere, who has all the lack of foresight of the successful but intellectually shallow man of business, for advertising that the choice lies between Communism and Mussolini and Hitler. We do not believe it does, but if so we cannot believe that the majority of people in this country would not prefer an experiment with even Communism to the rule of the Italian and German gunmen. We remind Lord Rothermere that the imperative necessity of keeping the people of the United States free from the taint of Communism was strongly insisted on by a Chicago spiritual brother—Al Capone.

A final gem from the *Evening News* is that "if the League of Nations had not been in existence the Emperor of Abyssinia would have accepted Italian control, and the whole melancholy business would have been forgotten." That is really a great compliment to the League, and brands Lord Rothermere as one of the clumsiest propagandists in existence. If he lets out much of that kind of truth, we are afraid that he will never qualify for the spiritual companionship of Hitler and Mussolini, and even Mr. Baldwin will feel ashamed of such clumsy support. We agree that but for the League our Government would have made good its promise to Italy, made in conjunction with France over twenty years ago, to give her a large part of Abyssinia. But until Rothermere, Baldwin, Eden and Mosley are made dictators of Britain, we fancy that most people here will prefer the policy of at least trying to encourage honesty and fair dealing in the world.

There is a vulgar impression, carefully nursed by a section of the Christian world, that the English Sunday, with its sourness and its repressions dates from Cromwell and his Puritans. As a matter of fact the Puritan Sunday was well established before Cromwell arrived on the scene. Mr. Philip Skottowe, in his *The Law Relating to Sunday*, has gathered together the various Acts that have been passed to date, and points out that the First Sunday Observance Act which "forbids the playing of sports and games outside one's parish was passed by Charles the First's first Parliament," to which "we also owe the statute of 1627, which first put a check on Sunday travelling." It was under Charles II. that it was held to be an offence to open a lending library on a Sunday. During the reign of the "Merry" Monarch, the sale of foodstuffs and Sunday trading were also restricted. But the general atmosphere of the English Sunday owes its origin to the Puritans. With the majority of these it was a set conviction that pleasure and piety were irreconcilable.

Two days before the Derby was run, a Spiritualistic Medium at Kilburn saw in a vision, a jockey in a grey silk tunic, and gave vent to the name *Mahmoud*. This is a distinctly useful type of mediumship. Unfortunately the *Developing Circle* was not a Sporting Circle, so no one is a penny the better. We suggest the hiring of a larger hall, and special advertising, *next year*, for a meeting or meetings a week before the race. A charge at the door might even be risked.

The Bishop of Lichfield is following the lead of the Dean of St. Paul's in respect to the Immortality which Jesus brought to light. No details could be given of spiritual mysteries, he said, as a matter of fact, they knew very little of the world beyond, not even if on dying one was caught up immediately to bliss, or if one had to await a Day of Judgment on a colossal scale. "What they did know was that Jesus had told them that as He lived, they should live also." And so say all of us. In spite of *Revelation* the question *and How?* is still unanswered.

The Rev. William Paxton addressing the East Ham Brotherhood dealt with what he called "the recurring fact" of the rise and fall of nations. England, he stated, had to take note of what it was that had caused the fall of great Nations in the past or they would go the same way as Egypt, Greece and Rome. This is sensible enough. But there is one difference in the circumstances that the Reverend Gentleman curiously overlooks. This is *Anno Domini*. We live in the year of Our Lord. The Great Revelation of God to Man is enjoyed by England. Does this count for nought? What is this but an admission, when we are counselled to learn from the lessons of the past, that Jesus and Him Crucified does not substantially affect quite natural processes which bring about the rise and fall of civilizations.

The *Daily Telegraph* would like to see a collaboration between Italy and the British Government in the restoration of European confidence. We understand that the Royal Society for the Annexation of Unguarded Jewels and other properties is also seeking the assistance of the police to develop confidence in householders to the extent of boycotting the use of safe deposits. The Secretary of the Association states that serious obstacles are placed in the way of the development of a very ancient industry by the "sanctions" that are at present in force.

Although Catholics are always boasting of a "revival" in France, facts, cold hard facts, point to an altogether different state of affairs. It seems, according to Fr. R. Devane, S.J., that:—

In France there are 10,389 parishes without priests, and every year there are approximately 431 more deaths than ordinations in the priesthood. Every year that passed amounted to a French diocese being lost.

In other words, "France is being bled dry, the spiritual blood has gone, and the Faith must inevitably die. . . . France is giving up Godless and there are no vocations. It was a case of Mexico yesterday, Spain to-day, and France to-morrow. If France went Pagan, it was good-bye to Europe."

This, coming from a Jesuit, looks like the truth for once, and it is very good news. The Hierarchy, however, is looking to Ireland to fill the vacant priestships and "French bishops are prepared to educate young Irishmen." Whether the young Irishmen will manage to convert France remains to be seen. So far, those who are trying to keep the Faith steady in Ireland are not having a too easy task. We wonder how some of these young Irish priests are going to deal with Voltaire—of whom it is presumed they have never read a line—when they come in contact with some keen-witted Frenchmen? Perhaps it will be a case of the young Irishmen turning Voltairians!

Here is the kind of thing which is being planted in the minds of the youth of Germany: "Whoever loves Adolf Hitler, loves Germany; and whoever loves Germany loves God." Mussolini puts it in another way: "Outside our principles there is no salvation for individuals, and far less for nations." "We regard the Emperor," says the Japanese, "as the living God." It seems rather difficult to disassociate Dictators from God or God from Dictators. At all events we find much the same thing in the pure and unadulterated teachings of Jesus. Look up John xiv. 6, "No man cometh to the Father but by me." And there are plenty of similar expressions which ought to make Jesus easily the greatest Dictator that ever lived.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

H. MORGAN.—Thanks for your promised help for the new *Freethinker* scheme. It can be made quite successful if enough will take a hand. We have already received many promises, but not enough. We will deal with the letters to hand, including yours, next week.

For Advertising and Distributing the *Freethinker*.—"Cine Cere," £1; H. Ranwell (New Zealand), 3s.

L. RICHARDS.—We have heard nothing further on the matter, nor do we expect to hear. Of course, if any explanation was offered by any of the parties concerned they would have an unquestionable right to be heard, but we do not care to publish letters from outsiders on the matter.

T.S.—Much of the wealth of the Church of England comes from land given it for various reasons, much from grants of money in past times, and present-day annual gifts from the State consist in the legal remission of rates and taxes. It is not easy to say how much this is, but if one counts site values only it must run into a very large sum of money every year. This grant from the State means, of course, a tax upon every payer of rates and taxes in the country.

S. THOMAS.—The only publication of the kind in this country that we know of in reference to the attitude of the clergy, is Mr. Bedborough's *Arms and the Clergy*. It is a book we would like to be very widely circulated.

R. LEWIS.—Very pleased to have your friends' high opinion of the *Freethinker*. It bears out what we have said concerning the affection felt towards this paper by so many of its readers. It says something for the better aspect of human nature, and its possibilities in the future, that a paper that has never pandered to its readers in any way should excite such a feeling.

J. BROADLEY.—We hope that Preston is not to be judged by the letter of Alexander Gits, S.J. The man who can present the Russian Soviet as teaching that "all kinds of morality must be destroyed," is about as low as human nature can get. Communists have talked about destroying what they call the bourgeois conception of morality, but no one but a fool would think, and none but a rogue would say that this means achieving the impossible task of destroying all morality.

B. L. BOWERS.—Thanks again for cuttings.

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 are in dead earnest about the plan we proposed for increasing the sales of this paper, and we therefore reprint in this issue what we had to say last week. There has not been time for much correspondence yet, but we have already had some suggestions, and one at least we are adopting at once. As a means of attracting new readers, it is suggested that we give a bonus to new subscribers. We agree, and for those who wish their copy to be sent direct from the office, we will send the *Freethinker* for one year, post free for 15s., but this will entitle the subscriber to five shillings worth of selected Pioneer Press publications. This offer applies to new

readers only, and holds good for the first twelve months. A form appears on the back of this issue, and will appear in subsequent issues.

We are not now saying more about our plan for increasing *Freethinker* sales. We thank those who have written for the trouble they have taken and the suggestions made. We will deal with these next week. But, we repeat, we are in dead earnest. *Freethinker* readers are good givers, but we are now asking them to be equally good workers. And we realize we are asking them for something that is not so easily given as money. We shall see!

Judging from the following in the *Star* of June 17, something seems to be happening in Russia:—

A resolution was to have been moved at the Church Assembly to-day by Sir Raymond Beazley, protesting against the "crushing out of the Christian faith from among the Russian people," and appealing to the Russian Government to grant Christians a more generous measure of toleration.

The Archbishop of Canterbury said that Sir Raymond now wished to withdraw the resolution on the grounds, as Sir Raymond said, that "the Soviet Government has declared a very ample measure of toleration, and officially abandoned the pressure of religious persecution in Russia."

Meanwhile it is worth noting that since the Italian Branch of the Fascist Party has abolished slavery in Abyssinia by taking away the freedom of everybody, so far as our newspapers are concerned Abyssinia has ceased to exist. Presumably, if the fact of Italian brigandage was kept prominently before the people, it would make the Government's substantial apology to Mussolini a little more objectionable than it is.

We have much pleasure in calling attention to a very useful booklet by Mr. H. Cutner, on *Pagan Elements in Christianity*. The work is issued by the Secular Society, Limited, and published by the Pioneer Press, with pictorial cover, at sixpence, postage one penny. It is full of useful information, and we hope that it has the circulation it deserves. We can think of no other pamphlet that is better circulated to disturb the faith that, if not delivered to the Saints, has been handed down by them. It establishes the essentials of the Christian religion as deeply rooted, immediately, in pre-Christian forms of belief and ultimately in the superstitions of savages. *Freethinkers* would do well to buy a spare copy for giving or lending to their Christian friends. It is a cold recital of easily verified facts, and the more damning because of the plain and simple way in which the cat is let out of the bag.

In *Living Philosophies*, published in America, by Simon and Schuster, the following appears from the pen of Mr. H. L. Mencken, one of America's leading critics:—

Is there a life after death, as so many allege, wherein the corruptible puts on incorruption and the mortal immortality? I can only answer that I do not know. My private inclination is to hope that it is not so, but that hope is only a hope, and hopes and beliefs, it seems to me, can have nothing in common. . . .

I believe that the evidence for immortality is no better than the evidence for witches, and deserves no more respect. . . .

I believe that religion, generally speaking, has been a curse to mankind—that its modest and greatly over-estimated services on the ethical side have been more than overborne by the damage it has done to clear and honest thinking.

This and many other outspoken *credos* of other living persons of eminence are featured in the *Los Angeles Examiner*, a copy of which has been sent us by a friend. It is safe to say that no English newspaper would print the same, unless, as occasionally happens, the quotations are drowned by pietistic counter-declarations and comments. In this way our "free press" does its best to add to the amount of damage done by the Church "to clear and honest thinking."

The *Yorkshire Post*, in its correspondence columns, has been allowing Church of England clergymen to say what they think of one another. The Vicar of Birchencliffe, Huddersfield, expressed his opinion that a sermon recently preached in the Abbey by Bishop Barnes of Birmingham, was enough to disturb the bones that lay beneath him. The Vicar of Meanwood, Leeds, then retaliated calmly that, "it was a blessing once in a blue moon to hear a sermon which makes us think," and that "tens of thousands of the intelligentsia of the Church of England were kept in the faith by such as Bishop Barnes and Dean Inge." Birchencliffe, returning to the fray, and to the point of the tens of thousands of the intelligentsia being kept in the faith by "Modernism," said that "as far as I am concerned, he [Meanwood] can keep the whole boiling." The Rector of Linton, Grassington, registered the contribution that many "were perfectly sick of the pose of the intelligentsia." It used to be said that there was one good thing the Church of England had undoubtedly done, and that was to place one gentleman, at least, in most of the villages of England.

Messrs. Brighton and Clayton are both busy on the N.S.S. platform in their respective areas, and there is no doubt whatever that these circles of regular visits are very successful, introducing the Freethought case to a wider public with a corresponding weakening of religion. Both speakers experience varied receptions, some amusing, and some exciting; and in breaking new ground, especially in religious strongholds, the spiteful influence of Christianity upon character is a marked feature.

On Sunday, July 5, the West Ham Branch will have an outing to Bookham, and London Freethinkers and friends are invited to join the party. The train leaves Victoria Station at 10 a.m., excursion fare 2s. 5d. return. Lunch to be carried, but tea will be arranged. Outings afford an excellent opportunity for meeting and making new friends, and will those saints who intend to be present send a p.c. to the local Secretary, Mr. F. G. Warner, 83a Dawlish Road, Leyton, London, E.10.

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.

Christian Imposture

II.

M. COULANGE, continuing his examination of Christian theology in *Religious Inventions and Frauds*, does not, I am glad to notice, make very much distinction between the so-called canonical gospels and the apocryphal ones. Freethinkers should never fail to stress this point. It is vitally important in all argument. The apocryphal gospels come from exactly the same mint as the others. They were written by believers. Obviously some gospels were better composed than others—as for example, John, with its long and mystical (and therefore more or less boring) speeches. But the idea in them all was to glorify Jesus in some shape or form, whether as a boy, man, or god.

In discussing Mary, the question of her "virginity" is thoroughly examined; and the author points out that, contrary to modern Catholic teaching, the first generations of Christians, indeed, right up to the third century, all believed that after the birth of Jesus, she had a number of other children. Certainly Mark and Matthew make this clear—though the average Christian theologian, anxious to justify the final dictum of his Church, feels bound to say that the words "brother" and "sisters" in the verse, "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joses, and of Juda and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us?" do not mean brother and sisters; much as the word "hate," when Jesus uses it, does not mean hate. The explanation generally given is that the brothers and sisters of Jesus were Joseph's children and not Mary's. It was, as M. Coulange points out, the account given of Mary's virginity in the *Protevangelion* that was finally accepted by the Church and by all pious Christians these days; so that, though this gospel is not "canonical," on

the matter of Mary's virginity, it is much more so than Mark.

But in the end it was considered not quite the thing for Joseph to have had any marriage or sex relations at all. So overboard went both the *Protevangelion* and Mark as far as Joseph as a father was concerned; and the following was eventually the pronouncement of that prince of theologians, St. Jerome:—

If we give ourselves up to hypothesis we can pretend that Joseph had several wives . . . and that the Lord's brothers are the sons of those wives. Many think this; but such a rash feeling is *not inspired by piety*. You say that Mary did not remain a virgin. I tell you, that for the honour of Mary, Joseph remained celibate, so that the virgin Son was born of a marriage of virgins.

And after that, "for long centuries the faithful had no doubt of the absolute chastity of St. Joseph. The brothers of Jesus underwent a new avatar and became cousins. 'The Hebrew tongue has the same term for brothers and cousins,' said the theologians, quite forgetting that all our Gospels were written in Greek and not in Hebrew." Thus is Christian theology formulated.

M. Coulange gives a most interesting summary of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception—which so many people still confuse with the Virgin Birth—interesting because the Church was split into two camps for centuries about it. Even St. Thomas, who is boosted up, particularly by converts, as the greatest of all thinkers, "put the Holy Virgin under the law of Original Sin." It need hardly be said that there is just as much proof of the Immaculate Conception as there is of the Virgin Birth. You either believe it on Faith or you do not. If you do not, then you should get out of the Church for you are not wanted.

The doctrine of Original Sin, M. Coulange says, really came from St. Augustine. Being a theologian—or ex-theologian—himself he goes into the usual theological particulars, showing which are the pros and which are the cons. At all events about 397 A.D. Augustine came to certain definite conclusions:—

First he knew with irrefutable knowledge that the child is a sinner from the very moment of its birth. Whence came this certainty? From the following syllogism: the child suffers: now, under a just God's government, it is impossible for suffering to touch the innocent; therefore, the child is guilty. As St. Augustine says, "It is not just to inflict ills upon those who are good. Tell me, then: what sort of justice it is which makes little children endure so much suffering. . . . You claim that they are not born wicked—that is with original sin. Where then, is the justification for the burden they have to bear?" Augustine knows not only that the child comes into the world a sinner; he knows also that the sin lies in concupiscence.

This is the kind of thing which is called "theology," and it gives the reader some idea of the way these monks and priests and Fathers of the Church, to say nothing of millions of other Christian writers, spent their time discussing nonsense quite seriously. It is still being discussed—as for example, whether unbaptized babies do or do not go to Hell. St. Augustine definitely says they do and proves it in this way in one of his sermons:—

There is no intermediate group where children can be sent . . . whoever does not go to the kingdom of heaven will go into everlasting fire.

But just as in these days there are a number of pious people who are too kindhearted to contemplate babies frizzling for eternity in everlasting fire, so there were other Christian theologians who felt it necessary to mitigate Augustine's severity. One of these was the famous Abelard, "who had, on many

occasions, taught heresy. On this point, he was followed by all theologians. Soon he was even outdone. St. Thomas said that little children, dying in a state of original sin, feel no suffering—they taste, on the contrary, unalloyed bliss." It is a pity we have not Augustine's comment on billions of babies lying in eternal fire, suffering only unalloyed bliss.

Nowadays, theologians prefer to discuss the uniqueness of "Our Lord," and the way in which, if only everybody took him as their Saviour, the world would at once become a Paradise. People can understand such promises far better than the subtleties of theologians. But M. Coulange gives extracts from an article written in 1920, by Cardinal Billot, who throws overboard St. Augustine and almost all theologians, on the subject of Original Sin. In other words, Original Sin looks like disappearing after all—and with it all the books written in its support, monuments of human stupidity.

M. Coulange's pages on the Resurrection, not that of Jesus, but of the faithful, in which he quotes the opinions of Irenæus, and Tertullian, and St. Augustine, are very amusing; for the question of sex in the future life seems to have bothered these—more or less—celibate Fathers. However, they thought that the lucky ones would all live on for ever at about the age of thirty. Spiritualists make the eternal age in Summerland twenty-five. But the Christians were greatly perturbed as to whether the elect would have "a stomach, bowels, entrails, when there would be no further need for eating." They went into more intimate details on sex, Tertullian coming to the conclusion that this would remain as it is at present.

Of course, nobody would go to heaven and enjoy the society of God until Christ's earthly Kingdom in Jerusalem came into being; and it is interesting to note that quite a large number of Christians believe now that the day is almost at hand when Jesus will swoop up the 144,000 advance guard of the Elect. The troublous times we are now living in are a sure indication of the Second Coming. Although speaking for God, a reading of Origen, Justin, Augustine and the other theologians, shows how bewildered these reverend gentlemen were on the question of Heaven. It was there, of course, or rather, it was somewhere. But what "heaven" really was, was as unknown to them as it is to the Bishop of London. Perhaps, like the word God, it is merely a few printed characters.

Hell seems also to have given theologians no end of trouble, as some of them—perhaps feeling that their own heretical opinions might land them there—insisted that "there was no gnashing of teeth or everlasting fire fed with corporeal flames" in hell. And they bickered about Purgatory also. In fact, there seems hardly a question over which the theologians, though inspired by God, did not quarrel. Fortunately for the Church, the Council of Trent settled a good many things by the very prosaic method of counting votes; and a thing was true, though nobody could possibly know anything about it, if a majority of delegates said it was. That is how the eternal word of God stands to-day, and it gives the key as to what it is worth.

M. Coulange goes very fully into dozens of other theological questions with which I cannot deal here, as no single article can do justice to his excellent disquisition. For those who want a handy compendium of the purely theological side of Christianity fully documented from the Fathers—proving, in most cases their indescribable stupidity—I strongly recommend *Religious Inventions and Frauds*. It is one of the most destructive attacks on Christianity which has appeared in modern times.

H. CUTNER.

The Echo of the Ages

THE world to-day is a panorama of ever-changing form and colour, as nations, once deep in the twilight sleep of tradition and custom, begin to stir and awaken to the sounds of new life and play that reach them from afar. As they stretch their limbs, and use their new-born strength, often clumsily, in getting used to new ventures and ideas, it is often difficult to tell whether they are changing for the better or for the worse.

We have been inundated with a stream of explanations, religious, political, and biological. But it is only by a study of man's past that we can understand the present, and, knowing the past, we can view it with that toleration born of knowledge.

It teaches us that man is a creature of environment. He lives in a society, and the whole is greater than the part. No one puts more into society than he takes out. Man is a thinking animal, and his history the record of his mental progress.

The religious talk a lot about human nature. But what is human nature? Man's past tells us of the long, slow, evolution of his body, and that when Man developed from the brute, with new faculties of sense and mind added, there arose swifter evolution of the mind.

We know now, human nature is a constant factor. What change are human beliefs, human habits and human thoughts. That man can be changed, and is changing, is obvious at the present time.

The air is filled with the wailings of the scribes and pharisees, crying, "Woe! woe! all is lost. We are heading straight for destruction. All that we hold dear, all that made our fathers what they were is in the melting-pot."

In an interview, about a year ago, an official of the Sunday Observance Society suggested all our ills were due to our laxity in observing the Sabbath. Who says the Old Testament is out of date? And the Modernist, when we point out the stupidities of the Bible, smoothly assures us no Christian believes that sort of thing nowadays. Religion has forgotten its humble origin; or most people have forgotten it, and no one is likely to remind them.

It comes as a shock to most Christians when they first realize that what they think is the last word in modern thought is the first word of an ignorant savage. And what they think is essentially Christian, existed before Christianity.

A little cockney girl once went to stay at a farm. She was taken down to see the cows being milked, and was offered a glass of new, warm milk. But she refused it. "Oh no thank you," she said, "In London we get our milk from a nice clean shop, not from a dirty old cow." Most people are in the position of thinking that they get their spiritual milk from a nice, clean shop, and not from a dirty old cow; in other words from the minds of untutored, primitive savages.

So much for the creeds and dogmas. But the argument used now is the moral one. Christian nations are the most civilized, Christian nations are in the van of progress and invention, and Christianity enables them to rise and build a decent life. If Christianity perishes, then the morality which fostered this life will perish with it. Those who have lost the belief, but are still moral in their conduct and behaviour, are living on the morality they have derived from a Christian influence.

Here again we can turn back to our friend the savage. Christianity can, and has existed at all stages of culture, from barbarism to civilization. Why is it that Christianity has given its support to every form of tyranny, from slavery to child labour? Can an in-

fallible religion have been mistaken about mere secular matters such as these? But the truth is there is no such thing as Christian morality. Christianity gives its support to the morality that exists, and obstructs progress in the name of religion. Its resistance to saner divorce laws is not a point of morality at all, but a part of its dogma. Much play is made about the sanctity of the English Sunday and the need of having a quiet day of rest. Concern is shown at the prospects of men working seven days a week, and in squashing any attempt to repeal the Sunday taboo laws. This shows to what depths Christianity has fallen; it cannot come out openly with these taboos and restrictions, but does so in the name of "morality" and the "rights of labour."

But when all is said and done, and all the arguments used, pro and con, the real reason for much religious belief is seldom mentioned, for the simple reason that it is a direct indictment of the creator. And that is a profound belief in the injustice and insufficiencies of the world. Mr. Hilaire Belloc once ended an article in a review by saying that there must be a deity and an after-life where the good man comes into his own because no one ever saw it happen in this life. Religion to many people is just a compensatory adjustment of this belief. Psychologists recognize this mental state, and name it the "compensation complex." When all arguments have failed the Christian says, "What becomes of all our hopes and aspirations to a better life? Without a future life, all these are vain and empty."

The answer is not a matter for words but deeds. Most of the present unbelief is due more to better material conditions than to logical reason. And the conquest of poverty which is the main problem of this age will do a lot more to liquefy what is left of this last prop of religion.

We need to be reminded constantly of what is real and what is false. Our terrors of vengeful gods and burning hells have been shown to be the foolish fancies of ignorance and fear. But is not man's dream of immortality a glorious vision, and his real mortality and transience a tragedy?

The tragedy of life is not that we are born and live and die and suffer extinction; but that we are born and do not live in any meaning of the word. We live cramped and confined by bonds of poverty and habits of thought. How seldom does the promise pregnant in us come to fruition! The craving innate in every one that cries aloud for self-expression escapes in sporadic outbursts through baser channels, such as religious revivals and war. When we have fully thrown off the shackles of man's past, and turned all that energy with its hopes and emotions into a common pool for the good of all, then we shall see them burgeon in that fertile soil, and see the dawn rise over that glorious efflorescence of a greater life.

I. L. ABRAHAM.

I almost shudder at the thought of alluding to the most fatal example of the abuses of grief which the history of mankind has preserved—The Cross. Consider what calamities that engine of grief has produced.

John Adams.

I wish it (Christianity) were more productive of good works. . . . I mean real good works . . . not holy-day keeping, sermon-hearing . . . or making long prayers, filled with flatteries and compliments despised by wise men, and much less capable of pleasing the Deity.

Franklin.

The Slumbering Danger of Unrepealed Laws

In Penalties Upon Opinion—first published, I believe, in 1912, with successive editions in much later years—the late Mrs. H. Bradlaugh Bonner provides a lot of information that should be very stimulating and helpful to Freethinkers generally.

For a long time, Christianity was deemed to be a part of the law of England, with the result that bequests designed to further Freethought were declared to be void, because they were considered to be contrary to the law.

Again and again was the wish of testators frustrated in this way.

"We now approach," says Mrs. Bonner, "the most important case of freedom of opinion that has ever been tried in the English courts. Charles Bowman left all his real and personal estate, after the death of his wife and the satisfaction of certain legacies, to the Secular Society Limited. Mr. Bowman died in 1908, and his widow in 1914. The validity of the gift to the Secular Society Limited was disputed by the testator's grandchildren, and the Society took out an originating summons to determine the question."

The case was heard before Mr. Justice Joyce, who decided in favour of the Society. Mrs. Bonner rightly remarks, that in view of the importance of the matter, it is somewhat remarkable that the Judge gave no reasons for his decision. All he said was that in his opinion the Society was entitled to the legacy.

The Bowman family resorted, unsuccessfully, to the Court of Appeal.

Then they went to the House of Lords. There, the matter appears to have come before a bench of four. One of the number was Lord Sumner. Frankly he pronounced as "rhetoric" the long-sustained plea that Christianity was part of the law of England, adding: "'Thou shalt not steal' is part of our law. 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself' is not part of our law at all. Christianity has tolerated chattel slavery. Not so the present law of England."

The outcome was a three-to-one decision which established, from that date, the legality of gifts for anti-Christian objects.

Certainly a great victory, this; but it has been vastly different with regard to the law of blasphemy. Mrs. Bonner particularly refers to two moves to secure redress in this respect.

"In 1889," she writes, "Mr. Bradlaugh introduced a Bill in the House of Commons, providing that 'after the passing of this Act no criminal proceedings shall be instituted against any person for schism, heresy, blasphemous libel, blasphemy at common law, or atheism, and that certain Acts named in the Schedule (1 Ed. VI., c. 1; 1 Eliz., c. 2; 9 and 10 Will. III., c. 35; 21 Geo. III., c. 49; 6 Geo. IV., c. 47) should be repealed entirely or in part."

The Bill was rejected by 143 to 48.

It is interesting to recall that among those in favour of it were Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, Henry Asquith, Herbert Gladstone, and R. B. Haldane.

The other notable attempt in a similar direction, instanced by Mrs. Bonner, was the Blasphemy Laws (Amendment) Bill, introduced in the House of Commons in 1930 by Mr. E. Thurtle. Very promising were its prospects, at the outset; but in the end it shared the same fate as Mr. Bradlaugh's measure.

Obsolete, Mrs. Bonner reminds us, is not sufficient. So long as an enactment remains unrepealed it may be enforced. Abolition, therefore, is what she urges; and it is to this end that she makes her appeal to those of the present day.

The tortures inflicted for heresy, no less than for blasphemy—in England as in other countries—make agonizing reading. "Heresy" is here used strictly in the sense of those dissenting or differing from the ruling or prevailing Biblical interpretations. Within this category comes the following case, cited by Mrs. Bonner:—

"Among those who suffered for conscience' sake was John Biddle, the founder of English Unitarianism. He was an M.A. of Oxford, and Master of the Gloucester Grammar School, but lost his situation in consequence of his denial of the Trinity. He wrote a book which was publicly burnt by the hangman on September 6, 1647, and he himself was imprisoned. On his release in 1652, he published some other pamphlets; and in 1654 he was again imprisoned. In the following year he was banished under the Commonwealth; but, returning to London, he was again imprisoned under Charles II., and died in gaol in September, 1662."

But this was very lenient treatment compared with the barbarity shown to so many others.

Something in the way of an example is afforded in James Naylor, described as a Quaker who was, at one time, an officer under Cromwell. "He was charged," relates Mrs. Bonner, "with having made his entry into Bristol in imitation of the entry of Christ into Jerusalem. His case was brought before the House of Commons, which—in this and in certain other cases of the period—seems to have assumed the functions of the Star Chamber. On the question being put to the vote, eighty-two were for Naylor's execution, and ninety-six against. The sentence as finally carried out was even more brutal than death. This unfortunate man (for—what shall we say?—"an offence against good taste") was sentenced to be whipped from Westminster to the Old Exchange; to be pilloried; to have his tongue bored with a hot iron; to be branded in the forehead; and afterwards kept in prison with hard labour indefinitely."

I refrain from here referring to the prosecutions for blasphemous writing-and-publishing dealt with at length by Mrs. Bonner, except for a mention of Thomas Davison, who was tried before Mr. Justice Best at the Guildhall in October, 1820, for the publication of a blasphemous libel.

In the course of his defence, conducted by himself, Davison said: "The Deist is anathematized because he cannot believe that some traditions handed down among the Jews and the Christians are a Divine revelation, and not only superior to the several and respective revelations possessed by the Turks, the Brahmins, the Hindoos, and many others, but the only genuine and authentic revelations in existence. Now it so happens that the Deist considers this collection of ancient tracts to contain sentiments, stories, and representations totally derogatory to the honour of God, destructive to pure principles of morality, and opposed to the best interests of society."

Will it be believed that the Judge there and then imposed a fine of £40 on Davison for these expressions, or without waiting to pronounce him guilty—as he did—at the end of the proceedings respecting the charge on which he had been brought before the court?

For further enlightening revelations as to the fight that has had to be waged for the measure of religious freedom that is enjoyed to-day, I must certainly commend Mrs. Bonner's admirable little compilation to those who have not already read it.

FRANK HILL.

Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.

Obituary

CHARLES VASPER

ON Saturday, June 20, the remains of Charles Vasper were cremated at the Crematorium in Landican Cemetery, Birkenhead. For a number of years he had been in poor health, and death took place on June 17, from heart trouble. He was an Atheist and constant reader of the *Freethinker* for many years, during which period the integrity of his character won respect from many who did not accept his beliefs. The widow and surviving members of his family loyally carried out his expressed wish for cremation, with a Secular Service, the latter being conducted by Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

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.): 11.0, S. K. Ratcliffe—"Why not an English Bible?"

OUTDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 6.30, Mr. G. F. Green.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Mr. Saphin. South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Monday, June 29, Mr. C. Tuson.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 6.30, Mrs. E. Grout. Rushcroft Road, opposite Brixton Town Hall, 8.0, Tuesday, June 30, Mr. P. Goldman. Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town, 8.0, Friday, July 3, Mr. F. P. Corrigan.

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

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 Kiosk. Should be ordered in advance to avoid disappointment.

COUNTRY

OUTDOOR.

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Well Lane): 8.0, Tuesday, Mr. D. Robinson, A Lecture. Literature on sale.

HETTON: 7.30, Wednesday, July 1, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

HIGHAM: 7.45, Friday, June 26, Mr. J. Clayton.

HOUGHTON-LE-SPRING (Market): 7.30, Monday, June 29, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

NORTH SHIELDS (Harbour View): 7.0, Tuesday, June 30, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S. (Bigg Market): 7.30, Friday, June 26, Mr. A. Flanders.

QUAKER BRIDGE: 3.0 and 7.0, Sunday, June 28, Mr. J. Clayton.

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

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