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Views and Opinions

Intolerance and Religion

In the preceding articles on persecution my aim has been two-fold. First, to remove the superstition, cherished even by many Freethinkers, that Protestantism is, in itself, more favourably inclined to genuine freedom of thought than is Catholicism, and, second, to provide an explanation of the historic fact that not only have intolerance and persecution been a constant feature of Christianity, but that they are closely associated with religion throughout the whole of human history.

It is a generally accepted scientific fact that man inherits from his animal ancestors a gregariousness that becomes a social life; and that the distinguishing fact of human society, as distinct from the animal group is the emergence of a psychological factor. Man not merely lives a common life with his fellows, manifesting instincts held in common, but he develops language, he creates institutions, and by means of language, even before the invention of writing, he is able to hand on to the next generation all he has received from the last, plus his own discoveries and improvements. He does not, like the animals, grow his tools, he makes them. He does not merely follow a custom he creates one; and both tools and customs are handed on as so many psychological facts, which, given favourable circumstances, increase in number and develop in definiteness. As in other cases the law that action and reaction are equal and opposite holds good. The first stages of human culture are very closely related to the physical environment. The nature of the food supply, the character of the climate, the geographical situation, all will have their effect. But the form taken by this reaction to the physical environment, will be determined by the influence of this new factor, which decisively separates the human from the animal society. Man still has, in common with the animal world, the need for food,

clothing and shelter. It is the method in which these needs are met, the tools with which they are satisfied, that is the all-important thing.

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Man and his Gods

Without discussing the value of the various theories as to the origin of religion the main fact that is established by modern anthropology is that man's first conscious reasoning about the world is expressed in terms of his own feelings. So soon as he gets beyond what Marett has called the pre-animistic stage, the world which man believes he has to come to terms with is a world of living forces. However sharp may be the drive of material necessity, the dominating factor in the satisfaction of fundamental needs is the living forces with which primitive man believes himself to be surrounded. However much he may do with his hands or devise with his brain, success is due to the living forces which his own ignorance has called into existence. Over the gulf of thousands of generations the savage here claims direct spiritual kinship with the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Having brought his gods into being, man hereafter moves in fear of their displeasure. At all costs they must not be offended. It is not merely the person who offends that suffers; the anger of the gods extends to the group of which the offender is a member.

A sense of collective responsibility is established. The gods refuse the harvest, or success in hunting or in war. The whole tribe is punished for the offence of one. There is small need to smile at this when we have many thousands living in our society, of which our ex-Attorney-General is one, who hold much the same opinion. We are near the savage in many things, but in none are we so close to him as where religion is concerned. If one could resurrect a man of the Stone Age he would be out of touch with us in many directions. Our clothing, our houses, our methods of locomotion, all would be strange to him. But give him our prayer books, our Confessions of Faith, make clear to him our belief in a Great Spirit who lives above, and who sends us rain and cures disease, and with all these things he would be quite at home. He would feel that he had regained the "spiritual home" from which the rest of modern life shuts him out.

* * *

Persecution as Social Sanitation

The great Bishop Bossuet was an able man, and, in many directions a kind and a good man. But he could yet compare a country which permitted heretics to live, to one where vipers were preserved as though they were doves. The fault of the statement lay not in the man but in his creed. No modern man would regard it as an act of intolerance because the

law declares that drains must be kept clean. We do not call it an act of persecution because a man suffering from an infective disease is forcibly prevented from mixing with his fellows. A man is compelled to do certain things in these directions, not merely in his own protection, but for the protection of other people. Disease germs have small sense of ethical discrimination in the apportionment of penalties.

Substitute the gods for the disease germs and we have the religious situation in a nutshell. We also have an explanation of the fact that religious persecutors were not always bad men, it was often their concern for the salvation of others that justified, to them, the torture chamber and the stake, and which even to-day justifies to so many the existence of priest-made blasphemy laws. Given a society in which the gods are believed to control everything, given gods with an elementary sense of right and wrong—and the most up-to-date god to-day lags behind the best of his worshippers—and we have the stage set for intolerance and persecution. Persecution becomes an act of social self-protection. Indeed, running right through the history of religious persecution, this fact stares the intelligent person in the face. The savage cannot afford to permit the one who offends the gods to go unpunished; the Archbishop of Canterbury will argue that blasphemy cannot be tolerated on account of its social consequences. And if Christianity be true, if religion in general be true, if the gods exist, and if society suffers or benefits as the gods are angry or pleased, then the savage was right, the Archbishop is right, Bishop Bossuet was right. Persecution becomes a religious duty, intolerance of disbelief a very necessary virtue. People will only become tolerant as they begin to disbelieve in the gods and to doubt the utility of religion.

But, unfortunately, by that time frames of mind have become habitual, and religion has managed to create a moral justification for one of the worst of habits. This, I must repeat for the thousandth time, is the great crime of the Christian religion—it has moralized and rationalized some of the worst propensities of mankind. That intolerance begins in the field of religion is to me unquestionable. And beginning there, the religious cast of primitive society, the fear of the gods, which is one of the most powerful of influences with all savages, ancient and modern, civilized and uncivilized, leads to the naturalization of intolerance and the moralization of persecution. One proof of the truth of this generalization is that it is only as Society becomes secularized that it becomes more tolerant; although there is always the influence of its religious heritage acting as a drag.

* * *

Wanted, a History

One day someone with far more time than I have, may perhaps write a history of intolerance from the earliest times, with full regard to the anthropology and psychology of the subject, and with a scientific study of its social consequences. There have, of course, been many so-called histories of persecution, but these have been records rather than histories. A cheap and easily-excited indignation has been evoked by the number of men and women killed or imprisoned, and on the platform and in the press, volumes of words have been written and spoken—with the chief evil left untouched. For the great evil of persecution lies not with those that are killed, but with those that are left alive. Persecution takes first those who are boldest in their thought and speech. It leaves in security and in places of honour those who keep their unfashionable thoughts to themselves, and who go through life wearing a mask, or with a mind

that has lost all respect for independence. Consider the many, many, generations during which one church after another, Christian, Jewish, Mohammedan and others, have by the aid of prison, or the stake, by social ostracism or business boycott, by every possible method of bribery and punishment, weeded out independence of thought and honesty of speech, and left the hypocrite, the coward, the time-server, the bigot, to receive all honour and to perpetuate the race. Consider the homes in which parents refuse their children the right to differ from themselves, the public life in which men dare not say what they believe where religion is concerned, the thousands of men in business who dare not let their real opinions be known, the politician who regards lying and concealment of opinion "as part of the game," and then reflect that this is the product of the influence of religion in the life of the race. And no religion has done more to bring about and perpetuate this degradation of the human intellect than has Christianity. I could forgive the Christian Church the men and women they killed; I cannot forgive it the type of mind that it encouraged to persist. Only too often when the Church was at its point of greatest power, it was with it as it is to-day with Germany and Italy. There was no disgrace in being put to death, but there was an implied disgrace in being left alive.

One other thing a scientific history of intolerance would bring out. This is the impetus given to the baser passions of mankind, and the perversion of better ones, by the Christian Church. The institution of celibacy and the preaching of hell may stand for the first. The teaching of celibacy, and the laudation of the celibate state as a state of "purity," led to the withdrawal from the task of procreation thousands of those that were best fitted by nature to become parents, and degraded the relation of the sexes. And the preaching of hell helped to brutalize the nature of those who preached and of those who listened. No modern psychologist can doubt that the gloating over the torments of hell for the wicked and the unbeliever was an exhibition of sadism, and little else. No one who will read a few specimens of preaching about the torments of hell, from the medieval priest down to Charles Haddon Spurgeon can doubt but that the preacher enjoyed his imaginative picture to the full. Here, as in so many other instances, Christianity provided scope for the worst in man under cover of the exercise of the best.

Even to-day the process is going on so far as modern life permits Christian influences to operate. In science intolerance is taboo. In general matters it is frowned on. Even in politics—next to religion the department in which the intellectual qualities count for least—it is not praised, and even though lying is here very common, there is a penalty for being found out. But in religion? No one greatly objects to intolerance, it is camouflaged under "strong religious opinions." No congregation that I know of seriously objects to its minister telling lies about rival religionists. And if he is found out he suffers little in consequence. Religion has its own ethic, and so far as it continues uninfluenced by modern civilized thought it retains all its primitive characteristics.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Men of character are the conscience of the society to which they belong.—Emerson.

I would suggest the taxation of all property equally, whether church or corporation—Ulysses S. Grant.

Sermons by the Sea-side

"As if, after sixty years' suffering here, we were to be roasted alive for sixty million more in hell."—*Shelley*.

"To impart the gift of thinking to those who cannot think, and yet who could think, is the first function of government!"—*Carlyle*.

At this pleasant season of the year when the annual exodus in search of health and sunshine is in full swing, one cannot help noticing the extraordinary number of clergymen among the crowds of holiday-makers. Around the coast-line of Great Britain and Ireland these black-birds are very much in evidence, and, with the characteristic nature of their profession, they are not averse from mixing a little business with their prolonged relaxation.

Note the number of open-air services, and perceive how these salaried sons-of-God pay particular attention to children. This would not matter so much, but for one thing. The clergy are not actuated by sheer affection for the children, but are prompted by sheer business. Their object is simply to "rope-in" the rising generation, so that their own bread is well buttered for a further period. Another point worth noting is that their propaganda is so very much open to question. What these pastors say to the little ones is not always the same as they tell the adults in the pews.

Ingersoll has pointed out that when a thing becomes too obviously stupid to repeat to an ordinary congregation it is passed on to the missionaries, who retail it to their more innocent flocks. Much the same happens with regard to the children. Away from the searchlight of Freethought criticism, the dear clergy resemble the bow-wow who returns to his regurgitation. They slide back, not only to very early Victorian modes of theology, which would be bad, but to sheer, unadulterated Medievalism, which is far worse.

Whilst in the pulpit, addressing adult listeners, the clergy are apt to refer to the *Book of Genesis* as being the perfect story of evolution without any of the firesome details of Darwin and Haeckel. Listen, however, to these charlatans talking at a children's meeting; or a Sunday-school class. Then they are as bold and impudent as race-course tipsters. They forget that there are such things as modern science and culture, and treat their sacred book as if it were last night's newspaper, and its legends but the everyday facts of commonplace journalism. Legends are no longer mythical, but are transformed into the material for an affidavit. The talking-snake in the Garden of Eden is temporarily transformed into a real reptile with a gift of speech, and the pantomime animals in Noah's Ark are presented as being ancestors of the animals at the Zoological Gardens at Regent's Park, or on the green slopes at Whipsnade.

Probably the most reprehensible thing introduced by the clergy to the innocent children is the presentation of medieval ideas of hell and of eternal torment. And it is here that fearful impressions formed in childhood have often such serious effect in after life. The clutch of fear is used of deliberate purpose to stifle reason in the adolescent. Adults are but children of the centuries of evolution, and we are but children when we are grown up. Those who feed children's fears are doing grievous harm, but what is to be said for the clergy who cultivate deliberately and systematically an attitude of mind which will tend to weaken the resistance of the child to the grossest barbarism and superstition.

This matter of clerical propaganda amongst children at holiday raises the far more important question

of the present priestly domination of national education. The plain fact is that in this country of ours real education has been hampered by the desire of the clergy, of whom there are 40,000, to ally religious teaching with the ordinary school curriculum. This desire of priestly domination has been further complicated by the dissensions among the clergy themselves. The teachings of the Church of England are considered by the many bodies of Nonconformists to be wicked and harmful, whilst the instruction given by Dissenters is pronounced by Churchmen to be heretical and highly dangerous. Roman Catholics, in their turn, consider that Anglican and Free Churchmen are alike so monstrous that they provide their own schools. Churchmen and Nonconformists, however, agree that the Christian Bible be read in the schools, but that no theological doctrines be taught. This is what is called "the compromise," and although it answers the purpose of most of the clergy, who use it as the thin edge of the wedge, it still impedes education and fetters progress. For the dear clergy realize that so long as their particular fetish-book is forced upon the children of this country their own impudent position as a clerical caste is quite safe, and their stipends secure.

In spite of all the protestations of all the priests of Christendom, there are grave reasons why this Christian Bible should have no official place in the school programme. Its educational teaching, for instance, is quite out-of-date, even antediluvian, and comes to us from the barbaric and ignorant past. What do our psychologists and Kindergarten teachers make of such sacred advice as "a rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding"; "Thou shalt beat him with a rod"; "Chasten thy son, and let not thy soul spare for his crying"? Such Biblical injunctions may receive the blessing and approbation of forty thousand clergymen, but they remain the essence of barbarism, and their application in this twentieth century merits the attention of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

These are not all of the indictments. Large portions of this Christian Bible are really unfit for children. If it were an ordinary volume instead of a privileged fetish-book it would be pilloried as immoral, and excluded, not only from every school, but also from every home in the country. Yet the clergy force this so-called sacred book into the hands of millions of children, knowing all the time that they dare not read the work in all its completeness to a mixed audience of adults.

There are other matters that are wide open to criticism. Bible chronology is sheer nonsense, no more reliable than the pages of the *Arabian Nights*, which, in places, it so closely resembles. Only grossly ignorant, or mentally feeble, persons can believe that the universe was created a mere six thousand years ago; that "Adam," "Noah," and "Methusaleh" each lived near a thousand years; and that Melchisedech had neither beginning nor ending of days, and may even to-day be employed on the Stock Exchange or in some retail shop. Philology gets no countenance from the yarn of the building of the "Tower of Babel," nor from the tale of the tongues of flame at Pentecost. The many exaggerations and prevarications of the earlier books of the Old Testament are sufficient to strain the credulity of a Gold Coast negro to breaking point. In sober truth, there is neither history nor science worth troubling with in all the many pages of this inspired volume. The atmosphere throughout is that of the *Arabian Nights* and *Grimm's Fairy Tales*. In the sacred pages a snake is said to talk, a whale has a boarding-house in his stomach, a pigeon acts as a co-respondent, and an

ass makes speeches. In its unvarnished record one finds fiery chariots, unicorns, dragons, flaming horses, giants, satyrs, and many another ancient marvels, which, found in another book, would only excite amazement, or even derision.

Concerning medicine, one finds the long-discredited notion that demoniacal possession is the cause of disease. Fevers are rebuked, leprosy cured by a fig-poultice, and blindness removed by expectoration. Some divinely favoured Biblical characters are said to have died twice, and others, still more favoured, finally leave the earth like aeroplanes. Witchcraft is insisted on as being true long after it has been discarded by every nation with the slightest pretence to civilization and culture.

As for ethics, the least said the better. The lives and actions of the Old Testament heroes are paralleled in the Newgate Calendar, and other records of criminology. Some of the over-praised "Psalms of David" are so gross and so brutal that they have had to be deleted from the official Prayer Book of the State Church. In short, this Christian Bible, from the page describing "Adam" and "Eve" starting life at full age until the hero of the Gospels ascends into the ether like a balloon, is a salmagundi of unrestrained Oriental imagination. The book, indeed, is an antiquarian relic of the dark ages, and, sooner or later, it will have to be so regarded. For Freethinkers have set themselves the task of freeing children from the barbarities of uncivilized times perpetuated by their savage survival.

MIMNERMUS.

C' est moi, Lorulot, qui parle . . .

ONE of the most interesting of the delegates to the Prague Congress of Freethinkers was André Lorulot, the Frenchman. This gentleman, who well deserves the title *Homme de Lettres*, which follows his name on his visiting-card, played a most important part at Prague. He presided over the Commission which brought about the fusion of the Proletarian Freethinkers with the old International Union of Freethinkers. In his own country he is known and respected as a leader of the *League of Anti-Catholic Action*, and the editor of two monthly Freethought publications, one being the informative, *L'Idée Libre*. At Prague I met and talked with M. Lorulot, and taking a liking to the man I sought him out, during a visit to Paris in June last, with the idea of renewing "old acquaintance" and of learning through his own authoritative lips what French Freethought comrades thought of the new French Government, and of the general position of Freethought in *la belle France*.

On a hot afternoon, therefore, I and a companion climbed the stairs of a little café in the Faubourg St. Denis. Here we found Lorulot and other comrades, male and female, resting after their labours on a committee, most of the men in their shirt-sleeves, and all with their favourite *boisson* before them. I shook hands with all, and with especial pleasure with M. and Mme. Noel, whom I had met at Prague. Two comrades from Morocco reminded me that France's colonial empire lies at her very doorstep. After my friend and I had received from kindly hosts our liquid sustenance, I ventured to ask M. Lorulot what French Freethinkers, or he, at any rate, thought of the recent general election in France, which had brought into power a Government of the Left, headed by M. Blum.

I cannot write here all he and others said in reply to my questionings, but the following may be taken as a fairly accurate summary of M. Lorulot's and his comrades' thoughts on the very interesting period in history through which their country is now passing. We are concerned here, of course, only with the strictly secular and anti-clerical point of view of their League.

M. Lorulot confessed that such questions had often been put during recent weeks. Some among his friends, he said, had allowed themselves to be carried away by great optimism, nourishing extraordinary hopes. On the other hand others showed a scepticism and refused to be stampeded. The speaker evidently belonged to the latter category, for he went on to say that no Government can work miracles, and that this was true of M. Blum's administration, however advanced and well disposed it might be. One thing was certain: Governments do not and cannot move except in so far as they feel themselves sustained, and even pushed, by public opinion. If public opinion demands such and such measures, then the politicians will be obliged to grant them willy-nilly.

But, he continued, how can Governments bring about reforms which have not been sought and strongly demanded by the masses? Even if they attempted to do this, they would suffer a check. To illustrate his point, M. Lorulot spoke of the project for the devaluation of French currency, which he said would without doubt have salutary consequences for the country, but which nobody dared to defend because the idea is unpopular. Many politicians, he said, knew that to overcome the economic crisis, it is first of all necessary to get rid of *la religion de l'or* (the religion of gold), but they do not want to, or cannot, say so. A good point this, and incidentally one that must interest English people, who went through the same experience in 1931.

These being the conditions of Government, what must the Freethinker expect from the present Government? First he wished to *constater un fait*. It was very rarely that parliamentary candidates had given an important place in their election address to their demands for secularism. They did not dare to do so for fear of offending certain electors and losing votes. (How like our dear old Labour Party, I interjected). Even the most advanced candidates had contented themselves with vague generalizations. Very few had put the accent on secularist ideas. Very few had said, for example, that the existing laws directed against religious orders should be effectively applied; that Alsace should be placed on the same footing as the rest of France so far as religion is concerned; that the French Embassy to the Vatican should be suppressed; that the separation of the churches and the State should become finally a reality; that schools should be defended from clerical influence, and that the clerical monopoly of propaganda by radio-broadcasting should be abolished.

On the other hand, said M. Lorulot, it was piquant to remark that candidates of the reactionary parties all showed a similar prudence. They had not attempted to *afficher* (display by posters on hearth-ings) their sympathy for the Church. They also feared to lose votes. Here M. Lorulot mentioned certain things that the Right hope for, but dare not say publicly that they want them. These included the return of a Concordat between the Vatican and the French Government; the re-establishment in the Budget of subsidies for different religious crafts (Note: not long since in France, any religion with more than 50,000 adherents could claim and did receive State support); the suppression of divorce, etc.

There was in fact, M. Lorulot thought, a tacit agreement between the parties of the Right and the Left to stifle the question of secularism. He had been amused to read recently a naïf article in the religious journal, *La Croix*, reproaching the leaders of the Right for their silence concerning their wishes with respect to the Church. Such were the conditions in which the directors of the *Front Populaire* arrived at power.

I suppose, said M. Lorulot with a wry smile, that I shall not be accused of blackguarding the leaders of the *Front Populaire* if I say that its leaders have for the most part not given, up to the present, sufficient attention to the problems of secularism and the struggle against clericalism. This detachment was only too general, and was to be found in all the parties of the Left. The Socialist Blum, the Communist Thorez, and the Radical Daladier, all appeared to him to have neglected equally and too long these questions.

My friend next turned to an excuse often put forward by "advanced" people for this neglect of Free-thought propaganda. It is, that there are more important and urgent questions awaiting attention. To wish to *manger du curé* (to eat a parish priest) while the economic crisis and unemployment are growing! To fight the Church when all efforts are absorbed by the struggle against Fascism and war! To dally over combating intolerance and religious fanaticism, instead of breaking the material tyranny of the *Deux Cents Familles*, which bars the road forward for France! (For those not conversant with current French politics, I would say that the Two Hundred Families contain the wealthiest and most influential business-men of France, who by their election of the Regents, i.e., the directors, of the Bank of France, have controlled the financial policy of successive French Governments, who in the usual Marxist manner are accused of being the tool of High Finance). Some "advanced" people had even gone further and dreamed of fraternal collaboration with clerical forces to gain these ends. They affirm that Catholics have their place in the ranks of the Popular Front. Here friend Lorulot snapped out, "As if it were possible to remain in alliance with the Vatican when one really and profoundly loves liberty!" My companion and I cheered.

To be sure, the speaker continued, the anti-religious struggle was not sufficient. They of the League had always said that. But we repeat that it is and must be the indispensable complement to the struggle against Fascism, against Capitalism, and against Imperialism. The Pope is the associate of Mussolini, of Dollfuss, *et hoc genus omne*. The Church stands for the maintenance of social classes and the exploitation of man by man; she stands for the rendering and keeping stupid of the woman and the child, and for the enslaving of the consciences of all. In a word, the Church wishes to reign and dominate by any means, even if they were as brutal as those she employed till recently, when she was strongest. Not to understand that was to have great need for instruction.

Clericalism in France to-day is very strong. It is the more strong in that the Church knows how to guard its independence, at least in appearance, in regard to the political parties. The latter pass, but the Church remains. Casimir de la Rocque (leader of the *Croix de Feu*) and Benito Mussolini can disappear to-morrow; Catholicism, behind the scenes, remains the inspirer and animator of all reaction. As long as religious intoxication will continue, all pro-

gressive advance will continually have to begin again.

Here lest our oracle should begin again we took our leave. As we went down the stairs and out into hot and strike-ridden Paris, my companion remarked, "Whew, how that man can talk!" "Yes," said I, "he has said a mouthful, *mais quel bon sens*."

BAYARD SIMMONS.

Liberty

SOME 2,400 years ago Herodotus, in dealing with the struggle between the Civilization of Greece and the despotic barbarism of Persia for the sovereignty of the world, tells us how after the death of Cambyses and usurpation of his throne by a son of one of the Magi, the usurper was killed by seven conspirators.

"When the tumult had subsided," says Herodotus, "and an interval of five days was elapsed, the conspirators met to deliberate on the situation of affairs."

Otanes recommended that a Republican form of Government be adopted, but he did not say anything noteworthy in his advocacy of it.

Megabyzus proposed that an oligarchy should be formed. He made a forcible speech. "Tumultuous assemblies of the people," said he, "are never distinguished by wisdom, always by insolence." And "The people are always rash and ignorant." Then, this—(Hitler must have studied Herodotus) "A Democracy seems to involve the ruin of our country."

He was followed by Darius who, in advocating a monarchy, said nothing of any moment. But in concluding his speech, he asked the following question:—

"To comprehend all that can be said at once, to what are we indebted for liberty; did we derive it from the people, an oligarchy, or an individual?"¹

He meant by an individual, of course, a monarch. Since his day, however, we have gained a measure of liberty through great individuals, despite the opposition of monarchs. But we have yet to wait for liberty being bestowed upon us either by the people or by an oligarchy.

Does it not seem strange that the subject of liberty has been discussed from the time of Darius to that of John Stuart Mill, and that the decline of liberty seems to be more manifest to-day than it has been for many years?

Is it not because we, by our advocacy of it, educate the opposition by showing them that liberty of the people means a restricted liberty for them, and so induce them to offer a stouter resistance?

Spencer seems to suggest this. "Divest the political machinery of all those aids which science and art have yielded it—leave it with those only which State-officials have invented; and its functions would cease."

Trades Unions are followed by Employer's Federations and so on. The people never adopt a fresh attitude in their fight for freedom, but they are immediately met by a strengthened opposition.

By the State our children are educated after a State pattern, and to think imperially in its interests. The State Church—the Church of England by law established—uses its influence to further our freedom to attend their schools and churches. Its sense of freedom ends there. Some of its priests threaten or intimidate news-agents so that no further orders will be placed with them for schools so long as they continue to display the *Freethinker* for sale.

The State Church, owing to its many advertisements given to the press, is often allowed privileges, and exercises an influence on the conduct of the press.

As newspapers are expected to pay dividends like other commercial concerns, we cannot grumble, therefore, that the Church should join the ignorant many in dictating the policy of our newspapers to promote their saleability.

¹ See Herodotus, Book III., *Thalia*, Chap. lxx. to lxxxii.

But just as the Church has been losing ground, for some years at home, it has clutched at any straw lest its indispensability should at any time be questioned.

Many years ago, when the Socialist movement was in its infancy, Socialism then was coupled with Atheism. Now, after many years, we have what a local preacher calls "a clean Labour movement, composed largely of men of my own class, Christians." The parsons have nobbled the movement.

Then the B.B.C., "Can such things be and overcome us like a Summer's cloud without our special wonder?" In its blessed ministrations how happy we ought to be! An old war-worn worker, his life one long fight for the freedom of his fellows can now, whilst dying in a work-house hospital, comfortably listen (we are told) to the pious intonation of a priest. Strange, is it not, that a savage survival such as intonation should be associated with a modern scientific invention.

Slogans are said to have played a wonderful part in hastening our march towards liberty.

Abraham Lincoln's, "Government of the people, for the people, by the people," gets much credit. But should it? "Government for the people," seems all right, but "Government by the people" seems to me all wrong. Let us speak openly and truly to the people.

The people are neither fit to govern nor to make an intelligent choice of those who would govern in their interests.

"There is no political alchemy by which you can get golden conduct out of leaden instincts."

Then there is the French one, "Liberty, equality, fraternity." "Liberty" is all right. "Equality" is all wrong. Until maximum inequality is reached, attainment of what was expected from "equality" will be delayed. "Fraternity" is right. "Fellowship is life, lack of fellowship is death."

What really happened after the French Revolution? Carlyle sums it up thus. "To anarchic Republic of the Poverties there has succeeded orderly Republic of the luxuries."

The slogan that makes an appeal to me most is this:—

"In things essential unity,
In things doubtful liberty,
In all things charity."

Unfortunately many things originally started for the benefit of the poor have now become oppressors of the poor. Now, they are middle-class institutions. And from the middle class less is to be expected than from the aristocracy.

As laws have increased liberty has declined. This is not as it should be. With the passing of a law, if there follows not an increase of freedom, then that law must partake of the nature of State-coercion.

What hope have we then of any extension of our liberties? By the education of the people? And how long shall we have to wait for that? When the people have learned the value of the simple aphorism, "unity is strength," and all that it implies, they will be ready to enter into the fullest liberty.

Emerson told us, in his day, that "we are but at cock-crow and the morning star," and that all we can hope for is "to draw men from the crowd."

Let us hope that we can draw sufficient men from the crowd to not only safeguard the liberties we have, but make a further advance possible.

GEORGE WALLACE.

Friendship is the shadow of the evening, which strengthens with the setting sun of life.—*La Fontaine*.

It is between fifty and sixty years since I read the Apocalypse, and I then considered it merely the ravings of a maniac. . . . What has not meanings admits of no explanation.—*Jefferson*.

Acid Drops

We have incurred the displeasure of the Rev. E. F. L. Henson, vicar of St. Paul's, Furzedown, Streatham, and in his parish magazine he takes us severely to task. It has happened thuswise. Someone has been sending the vicar "several copies" of this paper, which the vicar has read, because he happens to "enjoy reading views on religion that may be different to my own." Quite a good vicar, but there are evidently limits to his toleration, and to his knowledge, because he did not know of our existence until he received these copies. We accept the vicar's confession of ignorance concerning the existence of the only organ of militant Freethought in this country, which was concerned in one of the most famous blasphemy prosecutions of modern times, which is well-known to every paper and to every journalist in the country, and which was responsible for a very important legal ruling which determined the receipt of legacies by Freethought Societies, part of which legacies was to be expended in direct attacks on the vicar's own religion. We feel quite sure that the *Church Times*, the *Christian World*, the *British Weekly*, and other religious papers would be rather surprised to hear of this gap in the vicar's knowledge of the world in which he is living. But perhaps he is not so simple as he appears, and this was his gentle Christian way of telling us that we were too insignificant to have come within the orbit of his observations. This is the most charitable assumption, because, otherwise, one would have to draw the conclusion that the vicar is culpably ignorant of things he ought to know. A vicar, who is one that stands as a representative of God, and whose duty it is to protect his flock against all spiritual dangers, ought really to be better informed as to the dangers fronting his people. He is, or was, at least fifty-five years behind his time.

But the vicar has a very curious way of defending his faith. He actually agrees with much that we say, although he does not like the way in which we say it. Thus, he says that "in exposing the 'absurdities' of the Christian faith 'we pick out' the least intellectual and competent of Anglican apologists who are merely popular personalities occupying the positions they do as a sop to the popular taste." He adds he is with us at feeling

depressed by the present-day "popular preacher," whose sole success in most cases is due to a knowledge of practical psychology, through which instead of educating his congregation, he merely uses the faculty of appealing to a natural vanity by reiterating their thoughts and prejudices in the familiar "popular" sermon, where his nonsense suits theirs.

And with a closing remark that until he read the *Freethinker* he never "realized how narrow and bigoted the secularists' gospel could be," and an assurance that "the real leaders of Christian thought are not so easily disposed of," the vicar closes his comments on the *Freethinker*. It is thus plain that while he enjoys reading views on religion different from (not "to") his own views on religion, they must not seriously contradict his own opinions. It is one thing to discuss the exact meaning of "what our Lord says"; it is a very different thing and indicates narrowness and bigotry, to say that what he said may not have been worth the saying. That is being "most offensive" to any Christian reader. And offensiveness is the established privilege of a Christian.

But in saying that we select for our castigation "the least intellectual and competent of Anglican apologists, for castigation," the vicar is not quite just. If Mr. Henson had kept himself better informed as to what is going on in the world, and if like a wise general he had made himself acquainted with the nature and quality of the "enemy," he would have known that all sorts of Christian apologists are dealt with in these pages. Men such as Dean Inge, Bishop Barnes, Dr. Matthews, and Dr. Alington, to mention recent cases only, have been dealt with at length, and quite seriously, within recent

weeks. I place the Bishop of London in a separate category, because while he is an eminent Christian, no one can possibly question his incurable and unapproachable stupidity, and to deal with him as one would with Dean Inge would show a sad lack of a sense of proportion, and it would be an insult to the Dean. It is not our fault if so many of the present-day representatives of the Churches say so many foolish or indefensible things; we are not responsible for their appointment.

We are pleased, however, to note that Mr. Henson is disgusted with these "popular preachers," but if we select them—not exclusively—for attention, it is not because they are the only type of Christian preacher to be found, but because their shallow mentality does not prevent their giving a more honest statement of Christianity than is given by their more sophisticated brethren. The less intelligent preachers state a more genuine form of Christianity than do the more intelligent ones. The more intelligent, evade and mis-state. They say nothing of the real nature of Christianity, and grasp at every opportunity of leaving out all that is objectionable to modern thought in historic Christianity. Our purpose is to expose both classes—the casuistical fallacies of the more intelligent preacher, and the greater—but more intellectually honest—stupidities of the less intelligent one. And very humbly we suggest that the vicar might do some good work if he dealt with the conditions that give the least intelligent class of preacher so great a hold on the Church of to-day, and also why the more intelligent ones so seldom have the courage to face an attack from a downright opponent. We would be the last to deny that there are intelligent men in the pulpit, men who could make out a more intellectually respectable case for Christianity than can be done by men of the type of the Bishop of London. But we have also noted that when a preacher has intelligence enough to make out a case for Christianity, as against an attack by a real Freethinker, he has, in most cases, intelligence enough to see that he has no case that can withstand criticism. Christianity has reached a stage when most of the intellectual honesty lies with the foolish, while the more intelligent professors of it sit back and try and make silence do duty for dignity, and mis-statement for controversy.

But I am pleased to learn that Mr. Henson has now become acquainted with the existence of a paper that he ought to have known quite well many years ago. So far we have helped in his education. He now knows what he has to fight. And still further to help him we offer him what no religious paper, no church or chapel in this country will offer us—that is, the opportunity of using a limited space in these columns to make plain to our readers the fallacies of our criticism of his creed. We promise not to consider anything "offensive," even though it is expressed in the most offensive manner of the most offensive of Christian preachers. And greater licence than that could no man have.

The Archbishop of Canterbury says that the majority of people pay their tithes most willingly, and also that propositions for any alteration in the present system has not received the sanction of any ecclesiastical authority. So far as the last statement is concerned we do not recall any proposal affecting for the worse the incomes of the clergy that has received the blessing of high ecclesiastical authorities. Ecclesiastical authorities are not usually built that way. But the nature of the tithe-payer who "most willingly" pays his tithe is really affecting. It makes us amateur Munchausens feel what little chance we have when the high ecclesiastical enter into the competition. But why not go the whole hog and inform the Government it is anticipated that a demonstration of tithe payers will take place demanding that no Government shall attempt to cut down their contributions to the Church? We have not heard of any such demonstration, but from the Archbishop's speech we gather that some such demonstration is likely to be made. Of course, if the Government is obdurate, all

that is left for the tithepayers is to offer the Church as a free-will offering what they might have been compelled to pay as tithe. But the picture of the Archbishop begging that tithepayers be not robbed of the pleasure of being compelled to pay tithes is quite affecting.

Italy is following the customary lines of imperial expansion. Having declared that Abyssinia is conquered, it has taken the next step of pronouncing "brigands" those who will not submit to Italian domination. This is quite in order. It is what took place when we conquered Burma, and some people will remember that a similar term was applied to the Boers when some declined to submit, and will also recall the proclamation (of Roberts or Plumer?) that if the farmers out on commando did not return and hand over their arms, their farms would be burned and their families turned out. What is wanted now is for our Government to lend Mussolini some of our bombing-planes to restore "order" in Abyssinia.

The Annual Convention of the Anglican Evangelical Group, which took place recently, discussed "Christ and Freedom." In the report of this Convention which we have read, we were quite surprised to find that none of the speakers said that Jesus was the greatest Freeman the world has ever known. However, quite a deal was said about "freedom." It seems that "Freedom means the discovery that you only escape from the slavery of caprice and self-will, as you enter the more exacting, but utterly self-satisfying, enslavement of the bondservant of Christ." We can fancy a Nazi substituting the word Hitler for Christ, and feeling just as self-satisfied as any Christian. The Bishop of Ripon "showed that the Christian is the freest person in the world just because he is the most disciplined." Change the word Christian here for Fascist, and once again the truth of the remark will be apparent.

Dr. Ikin, writing in the *Contemporary*, is now almost certain that the falling of the walls of Jericho actually took place. They fell because, either the Israelites undermined the lower walls, or the noise of their work was marked by the blowing of the ram's horns, or "attention was distracted by daily spectacular perambulations," or an earthquake tumbled them down. You just take your choice; only as the walls did come down that proves the Bible—the whole of the Bible, of course—is absolutely true. Dr. Ikin's must be congratulated on this striking proof of God's Own Precious Word.

Unfortunately the holy words in Joshua are rather disquieting for Dr. Ikin's solution. They are:—

So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets; and it came to pass when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat.

There is nothing here about an earthquake—which would have been added proof of God's interest in the matter as earthquakes were some of his favourite punishments on blasphemers and unbelievers. Nor anything about the Israelites working to undermine the wall. In fact, Prof. Garstang's "discoveries" prove nothing whatever. There isn't a scrap of proof that the city he discovered is "Jericho," and the fact that the walls have fallen does not prove the truth of the Bible—nothing but the hopeless credulity of Bible believers.

As for the Church of England, the Bishop of Winchester, in a recent address, "insisted that the position of the Church was in many ways unsatisfactory and precarious. They were administering a law of worship which had not been to any considerable extent revised for about three hundred years." This is a nice confession for a Bishop to make. Here is a religion, given finally about 1900 years ago to the world, a religion unchanged and unchangeable, backed up by a Holy Book called God's Own Precious Word, and one of its Bishops

is complaining that the "law of worship" has not been "revised" for a paltry 300 years! Why should it be revised? Is it or is it not the final "law of worship?"

The Bishop actually called it "an obsolete law," and he declared also that "the Church had not got spiritual freedom"—whatever that may mean. But it seems a long time after the Glorious Message of Christ Jesus that one of his Bishops should find all this out. One thing, however, the Bishop of Winchester was violently opposed to. It was the suggestion that before anything was done to remedy the existing state of things "there should be a round-table conference. Extremists on both sides, who disagreed with its findings, would complain that it was unrepresentative." Therefore the suggestion was "unpracticable and mischievous." All of which goes to show the inherent unity not only of Christianity, but of its holy representatives.

The Right Rev. Kenneth D. Mackenzie, M.A., preached a sermon on "Perfection and Eternity," the other week. We cannot refrain from quoting the kind of thing which is received with pious reverence by the faithful:—

What He has done He has done; what He has suffered He has suffered. These are eternal things. He liveth. He was dead; He is alive for evermore. . . . It is finished—the perfect work of Christ; and because it was perfect it is not finished and done with but finished and abiding. . . . It is finished,—not it is all over, but it is complete. . . .

and so on. We hope the Bishop of Winchester will now give Mr. Mackenzie a good talking to.

The *Church Times* is complaining that our national newspapers do not give church news much space. "The Press is ready enough to print news that is news indeed." But surely even the *Church Times* could not claim that most of the petty doings of church and chapel, of vicar, curate, and deacon, are News? As a matter of fact we must do the paper justice, for it allows that "the Press wants live news and not the dessicated mummies of parochial ecclesiastism." But "no stunt is more exciting, no publicity can create a greater thrill than the plain facts of the living Gospel as it adventures in far places and constructs the foundations of new civilizations." Well, the only news, as a rule, we get about this kind of living Gospel is the kidnapping of some thoroughly unimportant missionary and the excessive demands made for his ransom; and except his own immediate friends, most people don't care two tin-tacks anyway. The truth is that living Gospel news is not news at all, but boring nonsense. And for this reason it is mostly excluded from the columns of our daily press.

On the other hand, some of it seems to get squeezed in by hook or crook. For example, there was the Royal Show held at Bristol recently. A Y.M.C.A. tent was erected on the grounds and religious services held. There is no news in this fact, nor in the statement that the Bishop of Bristol preached a sermon. But when the Rev. H. E. Dodd "offered prayers for the animals and the success of the show," the sub-editor must have seen something of news value, for he gave it the heading, "Prayers for Animals." Whether he did so, however, because of the superlative idiocy of offering prayers up for animals, or whether as a pious duty to his religious readers is another question. We wonder what the average intelligent reader really thinks.

Lord Castlerosse is the latest Champion of the Faith. When our national newspapers find things rather glum they look round for some "famous" writer to point out that the only way out of the world's difficulties is to return again to the childlike beliefs of our ancestors. It is most unlikely that many of their readers are aware that, in the past, the more the faith, the more the filth; the more religion, the more war, massacre, torture and prisons. Any standard work on history will confirm this.

In the *Daily Express*, a week or so back, the noble lord admits that even he did not altogether find in religion the consolation he thinks other people ought to. He says:—

After the Battle of the Somme, where the Guards Division lost nearly a hundred per cent of its effectives, a priest preached a sermon on the goodness of God, and somehow, as he spoke, when I remembered the mangled remains of my dear friends, who but a few hours before had been killed, I went away numbed.

But why? Didn't the chaplain point out "the goodness of God"? Isn't that sufficient consolation? Yet in almost the same breath Lord Castlerosse actually says that unless "the Empire again finds its God, she is doomed, as was the Roman Empire, when once she turned to Agnosticism."

Lord Castlerosse is, we believe, a Roman Catholic, and so, no doubt, what he really means is that we all should turn Papist to a man—and this is his way of saving the Empire! One remembers James II., Bloody Mary, Henry VIII., and other eminent Catholic monarchs. It is possible that in the faith of this crew lies our salvation? Is it possible that anyone really believes the Holy Roman Church with its stake and rack and prisons can save anything? And as for Lord Castlerosse's history, it is most amusing to find that he attributes the downfall of the Roman Empire to "Agnosticism"! Most, if not all, of the Roman Emperors were believers in some god, Jesus, or Jupiter, which god does not matter; and even an elementary knowledge of Roman history ought to have taught Lord Castlerosse that the real cause of the downfall was war. Centuries of war, with its loss of the manhood of the nation, was the primary cause, as any schoolboy should know.

Finally, the noble journalist says, "I would that a voice would arise and call us and I believe it will." Alas, as Schiller said, against downright stupidity, even the very gods strive in vain.

A commission is going to be set up to see whether Knock (in Ireland) will be officially recognized as a special shrine of "Our Lady." We have no doubt whatever that the commission will assent that "Our Lady" did visit Knock in person on August 21, 1879. There are still two witnesses alive who saw her—and that ought to silence for ever unbelieving or jeering blasphemers. If she visited Lourdes in actual fact, why not Knock? Besides are there not hundreds of miraculous cures reported from Knock? Or are there?

The "Freethinker" Circulation Drive

It is proposed to celebrate the coming-of-age of the present editorship by an attempt to create a substantial increase in the circulation of this paper. The plan suggested is:—

(1) Each interested reader is to take an extra copy for a period of twelve months, and to use this copy as a means of interesting a non-subscriber to the point of taking the *Freethinker* regularly.

(2) So soon as this new subscriber is secured, the extra copy may be dropped by the present subscriber. Until this is accomplished, he will regard the extra threepence weekly (for one year) as a fine for his want of success.

The plan is simple, and it is not costly; but it does mean a little work, and whether or not it is more blessed to give than to receive, it is certainly easier for most to give than it is to work. But in this case it is the work alone that will yield permanent benefit. There are many thousands of potential readers in the country; why not try and secure some of them?

A full explanation of this plan was given in the *Freethinker* for June 28, and a notice connected therewith appears in our advertising columns.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

SPECIAL

The National Secular Society has always aimed at providing as wide a platform as possible, and to give all opinions an opportunity of being heard, provided due regard is being paid to the purpose for which the Society exists. Such a policy is, of course, open to abuse, but freedom, as tyranny, has its dangers. But the freedom of our platform throws upon each, and particularly upon Branches, a greater responsibility than would otherwise exist, and it is very seldom indeed that Branches have failed to act in a correct manner.

Recently there was reported to the Executive that a certain person, representing himself to be an expert, had been lecturing sometimes on his own responsibility, sometimes for a Branch, and had behaved in such a way as to bring discredit on the Freethought movement. A minor matter is black-guarding of the Society's officials, with fantastic tales of the sums drawn from the Society by the President for his lectures. The last item matters little, although, as recently explained, the President seldom takes more from the Society than his out-of-pocket expenses, and in future he will keep rigidly to taking bare expenses, and no more. There will be no great loss of income in this. Not that this will stop liars exercising the one quality in which this class of person excels.

On enquiry the Executive has been informed that the person alluded to has been expelled from the Branch to which he belongs, and so far, the matter is at an end.

But I am desired by the Executive to take this opportunity of advising all Branches to exercise the greatest care as to the kind of person they admit to their platform. The fact of a man being a good speaker is not enough justification for giving him the freedom of our Society. Something should be known of his character and his antecedents, before a Branch puts him before the public as its representative. A man of the wrong kind may undo in a month all that a Branch has accomplished in a year. More than any other movement ours demands quality rather than quantity. Hitherto the Society has been fairly clear of dubious characters, but there is greater temptations in the N.S.S. to-day for the wrong kind of person than was the case years ago. Prosperity offers a much greater test to a man and a movement than does adversity.

CHAPMAN COHEN,

President, N.S.S.

Sugar Plums

Our *Freethinker* circulation drive is going ahead, and promises of help are now coming in more rapidly. Some are making themselves responsible for more than one copy weekly, and while we greatly appreciate this, we hope it is not forgotten, that the extra copies are most valuable when they are used to gain a new regular subscriber. It is the permanent enlargement of the circle of readers that is required, and if this is done it will certainly lead to other developments in the Freethought movement. We have other and larger things in view, which we will make public as opportunity permits. But we are in deadly earnest about this "Circulation Drive." We are unable to quote this week from letters to hand, but we appreciate greatly those we have received.

We wish to draw the special attention of readers to a notice in our advertising columns of the Secular Education League. It is a Society with which the National Secular Society has been connected ever since its inception, both G. W. Foote and Mr. Cohen having been on its Executive since the beginning. The Society does a very useful work in watching newspapers, distributing literature, and bringing together men and women of all shades of opinion, who are agreed upon the policy of confining the education given in all schools receiving State support to strictly secular subjects. There is no stated sum for membership; each member subscribes according to his or her inclinations. The Secretary will be pleased to give any information required. We hope a good number will take advantage of this invitation.

We have very many letters of praise and appreciation of the *Freethinker*, only few of which are published. We get also letters of dispraise, nearly all of which appear in these columns. But there is another class of non-Christian, generally one who is rather afraid of being thought to have strong opinions against Christianity, who will explain that the *Freethinker* is just treading the old path of "Bible-banging." How false that is, regular readers of this paper know. We can safely challenge comparison with any Freethought journal ever published in this or any other country for range of subjects dealt with, independence of thought expressed, and for what G. W. Foote used to call "fundamental brain power." So all this may justify our quoting the following from a reader in New Zealand, who has taken the paper since 1924, and who has preserved his copies:—

The enormous range of subjects dealt with, by contributors unfettered by any other consideration than loyalty to truth and justice, leaves one month's issue of the *Freethinker* equal in value to one year's output of any rival.

That ought to inspire more of our readers to go ahead with the *Freethinker* circulation drive.

We are pleased to see the question of the action of the police at public meetings raised again in the House of Commons, and although Sir John Simon expressed his detestation of the methods adopted by Fascists, while denying that the police showed partiality, it would be unwise to place too much reliance upon him. He is quite likely to find good reasons for doing nothing. So far as open-air meetings are concerned, as we have explained time after time, the law is quite clear. There is no legal right to hold a street meeting, but there is no one, not even the police, who has any legal right to interfere with a meeting unless certain defined illegalities are being committed. And, in such cases, it is to be borne in mind that *the onus of proof lies with the police*. That has been definitely laid down by the high courts. The notion that police permission is necessary to hold an open-air meeting, or that a police official has the power to grant "permits" for such a meeting is quite wrong. No such rights exist, and all attempts of the police to enforce recognition of their power should be quietly, but firmly, ignored.

On the other hand, the maintenance of order in the streets does rest with the police, and in holding a meet-

ing, care should be taken that no obvious obstruction is caused, that no obvious annoyance to householders in the vicinity of the meeting arises, and that no clear incitement to a breach of the peace is being committed. But, again, in such cases, the onus of proof lies with the police. An important thing to remember is that a disturbance which occurs at a meeting does not make the speaker, *prima facie*, responsible. It may come from a member of the audience, and the action of the police should then lie against him, or them. This again, has been decided by the courts—curiously enough, in a case in which the Salvation Army was the defendant.

We have advised National Secular Society speakers in various parts of the country how to act in the matter, and when they have so acted, the police have ceased to trouble, although every now and again we get accounts of attempts that have been made. In all such attempts, the speaker should not desist unless force, technical force, is used, and then the number and rank of the police official should be taken, and enquiries made of him as to who is instructing him in his action. The matter should then be reported to N.S.S. headquarters. Unquestionably there is a growth of late years in the direction of police interference, and the interference is always with the advocacy of unpopular or advanced opinions. We have only once taken action, and that was when the Chief Constable of Durham wrote Mr. J. Brighton an impudent letter, telling him that he would not be permitted to speak again in the market square, because a handful of rowdy theological students from the University had created a disturbance. As will be remembered Mr. Cohen went to Durham, held a public meeting, with many police officials present. Mr. Brighton spoke, and no action was taken. The police bluff had been called. Mr. Brighton has spoken there since without interference.

What we do not understand is why some legal action is not taken against the police where there is unwarranted interference with a public meeting. It is not enough merely to protest at specially convened meetings, or even raise a question in the House of Commons. The sooner these cases are taken into the courts the better. Whether the case goes in favour of the police or against really matters little. The best form of publicity is gained, and here and there one is certain to come up against a judge who has some genuine respect for freedom of public meeting. Creating disturbances is bad all the time. It is playing into the hands of the enemy and leads to a public endorsement of repressive legal measures. The *Freethinker* has greater warranty for saying this than any other paper in this country, for right through its history it has claimed the right of every opinion and every party to be heard, not excepting Roman Catholicism and Fascism—surely the most detestable thing that ever crawled the earth, for nothing can be more repulsive to a sense of human dignity to find bodies of men, not merely ready blindly to obey orders, but asking for chains to be placed round their necks, and begging to be ordered what to say. We had almost said what to think. But thought, in the better sense of the term, is non-existent in Fascist ranks.

Mr. G. Whitehead will be in Swansea for two weeks commencing on Sunday (July 19). Some of the best meetings of the tour are usually held there, and with the help of a number of enthusiastic local saints the present occasion should be well up to standard. Pioneer Press literature will be obtainable at all the meetings, details of which will be found in the Lecture Notices column.

On August 3, Bank Holiday, the Liverpool Branch are making a special effort with regard to a children's outing to Thurstaston Common, and parents and friends are invited to join the party. It is arranged to meet in front of the Liver Buildings, Pier Head, at 1.15 p.m. prompt, where a party of Freethinkers will collect the children and conduct the party. Fare: Adults 1s. 2d., children 7d., return. Food to be carried, but drinks of tea will be provided. Children's sports will be a feature

of the outing, which can be made a great success if kind friends are able to help the prize fund. Further details can be obtained from Picnic Secretary, Mrs. Alice Parry, 476, Mill Street, Liverpool, 8.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- R. V. BIRKBY, H. PARKER AND E. PARIENTE.—Many thanks for addresses of likely new readers. Paper being sent for four weeks.
- S. MORRISON.—We saw the Jonah and the whale yarn; but we are almost tired of checking the way in which the *Sunday* and *Daily Express*, in their thirst for circulation, cater for the most stupid order of religionists. One of two things is certain. Either the man in charge of the religious news is about the most benighted individual in the world of journalism, or he has most profound understanding of the most ignorant and the most superstitious order of religionists, and means to get their pence at any cost.
- D. G. MOWBRAY.—Thanks. Shall appear.
- D. MAPP.—The Rev. "Dick" Sheppard's recollection of the Atheist foreman and the Christian workman deserves to be placed along with these recollections of the experiences of a parson that help to remind us how slight is the acquaintance in the pulpit between narrative and truth.
- M. WHITEFIELD.—A notice effective for July 17, would be of no use in a paper published in London on the 15th. Should have reached us in time for previous issue.
- J. HUMPHRIES.—Astrological forecasts are too ridiculous to spend space on.
- WILL Mr. H. Morton be good enough to send address to the editor. It is being asked for by a friend.
- 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."*

A Plea for a Common Front

(Continued from page 443)

I ASK the reader of this essay to bear in mind what I have said of the function of the proletariat in paving the way to the classless world-state, while we consider the following quotation from J. M. Robertson's *Short History of Christianity*:—

... the Leninist, Soviet or Communist Republic [sic]. That has meant, over and above its massacres, a grossly tyrannous repression of religion, with a system of Atheistic education so far as any education exists. Political bigotry has operated in the spirit and manner of religious bigotry, with the usual result of self-frustration. . . . A monition not of progress but of reaction.

We will omit the ineptitude of the prophecy of frustration and the glaringly false sneer at Soviet tendencies in education." Whatever colouring of

⁹ The malignancy of this remark of Robertson's is shown by the fact that whereas the Tzarist Government spent about 150 million roubles annually on education, the Soviet (1936) voted over four billion roubles—not inclusive of a billion rouble increase in teachers' salary. There are now 26 millions in Soviet schools; in 1935 alone 3,362 new schools were built, and 700,000 teachers are now employed. School-children already have also numerous sanatoria, stadiums, and rest-homes; 66 theatres, and 570 agricultural stations of their

"truth" the passage has is drawn from the conditions during, and shortly after, the civil war thrust on the Bolsheviks by Russian, English and French imperialists. As a statement of the reality of Soviet society it could hardly be matched for vile colouring even from the columns of the *Daily Mail* or a Nazi sheet. And this shameful stuff is supposed to represent a Rationalist and Freethinking viewpoint, and appears in a book published by a Rationalist press. Robertson, it is clear, can see the human struggle only up to the point when it frees his particular brand of liberalism; after that he insists that the struggle continue in the terms he has accepted (the political forms developed by the needs of capitalist free-trade); he has no more historical perception than any bribed academic of reaction. (Let me add that I have read many of Robertson's books with profit and pleasure; but that does not absolve me from pointing out his limitations.)

What are the facts in the Soviet law as to religious bodies? Here are the regulations:—

- (a) All religious bodies are to be separated from the State.
- (b) All education is to be separated from the control of the Churches.
- (c) Any church may be closed down only after a plebiscite of the inhabitants served by it has shown a two-thirds majority in favour of closing down.
- (d) Where churches are closed down alternative accommodation must be provided within a radius of three miles if 15 per cent of those who voted in the plebiscite were in favour of them remaining open.
- (e) Complete freedom shall be accorded all Soviet citizens to follow any form of religious worship they please, or to follow none if they so desire.

Is not this a code to which the N.S.S. can subscribe?

While touching on this subject, let me point out how the reactionary press tries to lump together all Red activities in Spain, and to blame Marxism for church-burnings, etc. The facts are that destruction of any kind is counter to Communist principles; for all human creation is valuable to the Communist. "No one can claim to be a Communist till he has absorbed in memory all the wealth that mankind has created" (Lenin). The Church-burnings are the result of mob-outbursts led by the Anarchists against the age-long oppressor, Fascist provocation (on the model of the Reichstag burning), and fights developing from the fact that the clergy allow the Fascists to use the churches for arms-dumps.

We can deal with this question of violence better if we consider the whole question of Revolution. The prevalent and incorrect opinion is that the Marxist advocates a kind of abstract-revolutionism. Nothing could be further from the facts. The tactical works of Lenin and Stalin alone should disprove the imputation of abstract-revolutionism—particularly as it is

own, etc., etc. And this, of course, is only the start. Now that the heavy-industries are developed, each year sees a vast increase in social services. Nor is Robertson to be excused as having written in a time before the Communist attitude to education was apparent. As Trevelyan (*op. cit.*) says: "The community is, indeed, more desperately concerned with children than elsewhere. In the worst times of civil war, they were already spending an astonishing proportion of their slender resources on education. It seems as if the generation which passed through the revolution knew that it could not attain for itself a perfect society, and were determined to build it through the children and coming generations." Note in Robertson's *Short History*, his entirely imperceptive account of the peasant-revolt under Münzer; having reached the limit of his social sympathies, he writes of Münzer exactly like any Catholic or Calvinist historian.

precisely that tendency which the Party repudiated in the persons of Trotsky and Zinoviev.

The Communist policy is to press forward the democratic movement in every aspect, to use every constitutional method possible. But the Communist knows perfectly well from history and from his analysis of the existent world, that a parasitic class will not and cannot allow itself to be removed without fighting to the last ditch. It is only at the point where the ruling-class resort to arms that Communism preaches resistance by arms—revolution. But the Communist knows that he would fail in his duty if he did not always preach preparedness for this moment of reactionary violence.

It is the increasing productivity of the workers which inevitably leads to their taking over the means of production, and the curve of production must be a continuously ascending one, except in so far as there is sabotage by the violent resistance of the proprietor class. It is in the interests of the ruling class to represent the revolutionary class as vowed to violence, because they do not shrink from making it clear that they are ready to defend their gains with force against force. In Italy the taking over of the factories in 1920 was accomplished without any loss of life; it was in their recovery by the owners that the workers were killed. Edgell Rickword in *Left Review*, II., 7.¹⁰

But for the reasons that I have already given, there is a large class of people in England who persist, despite the collapse of all the reasons on which they base their optimism, in saying that things are different here, and that the transition to Socialism can be bloodlessly effected. No one would be more pleased than the Marxists if this miracle occurred, and there is nothing in their tactics to prevent it, if it is the truth. They preach only preparedness for the clash.

The intellectuals in Germany, on the eve of Hitler's coup, all repeated, "It can't happen here, Germany is not Italy." They thus helped Hitler enormously. Our intellectuals are taking the same ostrich-attitude. There is however an actual event in our history which provides us with all the necessary proof of ruling-class readiness for violence. When it seemed that Home Rule was to go against the landlord-interests, in 1914, General Gough, supported by his officers, defied Parliament, defied the constitutional authorities; and Parliament (supposedly the source of power) could do nothing.

That act showed what all our constitutional supports are worth as soon as they seriously threaten ruling-class interests. They are a mere "scrap of paper." When the ruling-class showed themselves ready to rebel over such a comparatively trivial question as Ulster, do you imagine they will not precipitate any violence and bloodshed rather than surrender their entire social stranglehold? The moment that Communism showed anything like a parliamentary majority, the ruling classes would have tanks and machine-guns in the streets. Remember what fathomless brutality this class has shown in its treatment of the coloured races, and is showing at this moment. Do you really think they will have any scruples what steps they take if cornered? And they are too shrewd to wait till they are cornered. As in Germany, the ruling-class will act as soon as they see things going badly against themselves. Don't forget that the Ger-

¹⁰ "Of course, the working-class will use the parliamentary channel so long as it is open. Of course, they will not resort to violence until and unless the capitalists do. But to assert dogmatically that the capitalists will not resort to violence, and will not, therefore, force us to follow their example, seems to me the height of optimism." (John Strachey, *Discussion* 4.)

man elections of November, 1932 showed a rise in the Communist vote to nearly six millions. That was why Hitler was rushed into power.¹¹

The Communist therefore advocates preparedness for resistance to ruling-class sabotage. The last thing he preaches is abstract-revolutionism; for he knows that nothing plays into the hands of reaction so much as an artificially induced revolution. When the capitalist structure collapses and the workers begin to take over the mechanism of production, then emerges a real "revolutionary situation," for then comes the moment when reaction will stand up in all its ruthlessness.

Yet the notion persists that the Marxist (who is in fact pressing the democratic struggle to its conclusions at every point of the political front) is helplessly waiting for a "revolutionary situation" to be given to him. Thus speak two by-no-means-unfriendly critics of the Marxists:—

Their solution of the problem is, primarily, revolution in the circumstances created when war has come. . . . Whereas ours, in admitting the broad truth of the first four-fifths of their analysis, lies in aiming at a cumulatively international habit of mind among men and women as they exist to-day . . . and at a cumulative socialization and collectivization of society as far as may be.¹²

Now these latter phrases express exactly what the Marxist strives to do—except that he adds: But events don't wait on us, the break-up of monopoly-capitalism under imperialist rivalries isn't going to wait while we complete the work of educating everyone and pleasantly transforming the world; the *moment of choice, the social cataclysm*, is going to come suddenly, and we must be ready to assume the leadership or all is lost. The change to the basically new values of classless society, the new organic quality, is a revolutionary change; and unless we are to be cowards, we must face that fact.

But the idea that we must wait on war is altogether sectarian, abstract, non-Marxist. Why is the Communist Party fighting so hard to build Popular Fronts in all democratic countries? Because it believes the world-war for which the Fascists and Baldwin are preparing can be averted if the proletariat unite. Anyone who has read the day-to-day statement of Communist policy in the *Daily Worker*, will appreciate what I say. The fight against war is profoundly hopeful, and is in utter antithesis to the sectarian policy affirmed by the I.L.P., which exactly fits the misrepresentation quoted above of Marxist policy. And in the antics of the I.L.P. we find a perfect example of the way that deviation from the dialectical analysis forces the "sincerest" of men into producing effects that they loathe; Maxton and McGovern have become indistinguishable in relation to Fascist

¹¹ Read Marx's *Class Struggles in France*, 1848-50, and his *Civil War in France*, to see what mercy the ruling-class has on a proletariat that tries to assert itself with a minimum of violence. I do not mean by my remarks above, that the Communists in Germany were on the point of electoral victory; the increase in their votes was merely part of the swing against Hitler which had set in. (Read R. Olden's *Hitler the Pawn*.)

¹² *The Citizen Faces War*, by R. & B. Donnington, an excellent book which tells the tale of the no-Conscription Fellowship during the War. Read it and lose any illusions you may have as to ruling-class ruthlessness. Compare what Douglas Goldring says in *Odd Men Out*: "It is sometimes said and fondly believed that Englishmen could never commit the atrocities associated with Fascist rule. As the technique of Fascist terrorism was developed and patented by the British 'Black and Tans' in Ireland—the Nazis have even honoured us by borrowing the classic phrase, 'Shot while trying to escape'—it may be as well to remind present-day English readers of what they may expect if they allow the reactionaries to triumph."

aggression in Abyssinia from the most chauvinist of conservatives, As an instance of Communist tactics we may take the creation of the Popular Front and the "insurrectionary" calling-out of the Paris workers in February, 1934, followed by the General Strike show of power. No one can deny that these actions saved France from an impending Fascist coup, and will perhaps prove to have been decisive in saving Europe for democracy and peace.

JACK LINDSAY.

(To be concluded)

Some Champions of the Church

II.

FOR pious vileness I could hardly better Torquemada and King James II. as genuine Champions of the Church. They have left a record of cruelty exceedingly difficult to beat, even among Roman Catholics. But there are others who, while they cannot be held responsible for such tortures, murders, and burnings as have made Torquemada and James II. so famous, yet have generously allowed the world to know what they would do if only given the chance.

For example, let us take the "Angelic" doctor, Thomas Aquinas. That he was a great scholar and logician it would be foolish to deny. Indeed, he may even be reckoned as the greatest scholar the Church has produced—unless, of course, Jesus is claimed as the greatest scholar the world has ever known. It should be added, however, that it was Jesus who produced the Church and not the Church, Jesus, if Christian history is true.

The fame of Aquinas has certainly grown with the years—at least, to Catholics. Most people have not read his *Summa Theologica*, which is considered "a compendium of all human knowledge in relation to religion." I have not read the *Summa* myself, but fortunately there are extracts which are quite easily obtainable. As a theologian, Aquinas is in the first rank. Catholics also consider that he is one of the greatest of philosophers. His great merit in their eyes is that he reconciled reason with revelation, for according to him "while reason can prove the existence of God, revelation shows the essence of God." Moreover, he claimed that "the intellectual appreciation of God—that is, knowledge proceeding from divine revelation—is all important." And one of his admirers, Mr. Joseph Clayton, says that Aquinas "with a literary style marvellously clear and concise, covered the whole ground of human knowledge, and leaves no question unsolved." This is very comprehensive, but perhaps Mr. Clayton does not mean to be taken literally. Be that as it may, there can be no doubt that, as far as learning goes, Thomas Aquinas, who died at the comparatively youthful age of 47, was some scholar. As for ethics, "Aquinas maintains that ethics is the science of directing the will to the real good, but he makes charity or love the central unity of the virtues." And he was "a man of exceptional religious fervour and simple piety." We have therefore a great and rare combination—a wonderful scholar, philosopher, and theologian, with a whole-hearted belief in religion thrown in. What does Aquinas say about unbelievers and heretics? Here are his own words:—

Though heretics must not be tolerated because they deserve it, we must bear with them, till, by a second admonition, they may be brought back to the faith of the Church. But those who, after a second

admonition, remain obstinate in their errors, must not only be excommunicated, but they must be delivered to the secular power to be exterminated.

That is all—they should be “exterminated.” The sweet angelic doctor, the great scholar and ethicist, who makes charity or love the central unity of the virtues, insists that heretics ought to be exterminated. One can fancy hearing the sweet gentle tones of Hitler—another Roman Catholic—talking like that.

As a great reasoner, Aquinas clinches the matter by argument. He says:—

If falsifiers of money or other malefactors are justly consigned to immediate death by secular princes, much more do heretics, immediately after they are convicted of heresy, deserve not only to be excommunicated, but also justly to be killed.

And to clinch the matter still further we have, in the *Missal for Laity* (1830), the following prayer referring to Aquinas:—

O God, who, by the wonderful learning of blessed Thomas, thy confessor, has illustrated thy Church, and by his virtues has enlarged it, grant, we beseech thee, that we may understand what he taught, and in our lives follow what he practised.

Whether Aquinas ever was responsible for the extermination of heretics, I do not know; but it is good to see that even he agreed with Torquemada on this point. It was, perhaps, only lack of opportunity which prevented him from outshining the great Spanish Champion. One point should be further noted. It is simply that the Church has never relinquished its right to persecute and exterminate heretics. Individual Roman Catholics may, here and there, deny this statement. But it has not been and never could be officially denied. One can see this in a sentence taken from the Encyclical of Pope Pius VII. (1808):—

It was proposed that all religious persuasions should be free, and their worship publicly exercised. But we have rejected this article as contrary to the canons and councils of the Catholic Church.

He could easily have added that the extermination of heretics was also part and parcel of all the canons and councils of the Church. Indeed, the other great Roman Catholic theologian, Dens, expressly approves of Aquinas's extermination of heretics, and appeals also to the Old Testament, where false prophets were slain.

So much for the seraphic St. Thomas. Let us now place beside him the Protestant, John Calvin. For Calvin also was a great scholar and theologian. He was but twenty-five when he wrote his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*—a work which exerted tremendous influence on his contemporaries. It was after writing this book that Calvin went to Geneva, where he was induced to remain teaching theology. Here it was that he instituted a dictatorship—perhaps sublimely unconscious that it was in some ways quite as bad as that of the Church he so violently opposed. While he favoured education to some degree Calvin insisted upon plenty of religious instruction.

It must not be supposed that the people of Switzerland took too kindly to this dictatorship. When Calvin laid down rules as to how clothes should be cut and worn, or how beards ought to be trimmed, there was a great deal of dissension. But like other and more modern dictators, Calvin had his way in the end, though he actually was banished from Geneva at one time.

Calvin was a violent controversialist, impatient of opposition. His theology was based on predestination and election, and there never has been a more fervid supporter of Hell in its most terrible aspects. Anyone who opposed him was almost always made to feel his blustering wrath here, and the certainty of hell-fire later. For the angelic Aquinas, extermination at once was the fate all obstinate heretics should suffer. For the imperious impatient Calvin the same end awaited the hated unbeliever in Calvin's preposterous religion.

The fate of Servetus at the hands of John Calvin is, of course, the most memorable act in his career. His theological works, his commentaries and explanations of God's scheme in the Universe are almost forgotten. One reads the *Institutes* nowadays as a curiosity. But the slow deliberate burning at the stake of Michael Servetus, merely for differing from Calvin, is a crime that the world can never forget or forgive any more than it can forget the burning of Bruno, and the years of martyrdom of Dreyfus at the hands of a clique of French Catholic militarists.

Calvin hunted Servetus for years, and when Servetus appeared in Geneva after narrowly escaping death in Vienna for heresy, Calvin jumped at the chance. Servetus was accused of denying the Trinity, and holding some mild Pantheistic views. Calvin was “the accuser, the persecutor, and the judge.” The result could be in no doubt, and the gentle scholar Servetus, who had never done anybody any harm, who wanted nothing but the right to express his free thoughts, was condemned to the stake, Calvin insisting that it should be death in a slow fire. The wood was green oak, and burnt slowly, and poor Servetus' cries and shrieks as he was thus tortured, ring in our ears to this day. The Protestants who calmly viewed the agonizing scene must have flattered themselves that, of course, they were better Christians than Catholics. It should be added that most of the other reformers such as Zwingli, Melancthon, Beza, all approved of Calvin's fiendish act.

This religious assassination was not the only heinous act of the great Protestant Champion. He caused “the execution of the poet James Gruet, for a slight offence.” He hunted down the scholar Castalio, who literally died of hunger. He and Luther “crushed of the people of the countries which were the respective theatres of their labours. Their profession of breaking the bonds of religious slavery, and of securing political freedom to the people, was all mere talk.”

Ingersoll summed up Calvin in one of his inimitable pen-sketches:—

Calvin was of a pallid, bloodless, complexion, thin, sickly, gloomy, impatient, egotistic, tyrannical, heartless, and infamous. He was a strange compound of revengeful morality, malicious forgiveness, ferocious charity, egotistic humility, and a kind of hellish justice. In other words he was as near like the God of the Old Testament as his health permitted. The best thing, however, about the Presbyterians was that they denied the power of the Pope, and the best thing about the Pope was that he was not a Presbyterian.

What great and noble Champions of the Church were Aquinas and Calvin!

H. CUTNER.

This should be enough for one who lives for truth and service to his fellow passengers on the way. No avenging Jewish God, no satanic Devil, no fiery hell is of any interest to him.—*Luther Burbank.*

Correspondence

THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—Once more I feel so much in sympathy with Mr. Saphin's able letter, with its eminently practical point of view that I am diffident about offering any remarks that might emphasize the difference in our two learned interpretations of Holy Scripture.

"These ancient oracles can generally be read in two ways" is to me a significant admission. It is true enough that the words, "Let the dead bury their dead" were harsh, and yet the macabre image evoked was as worthy of a poet as the implicit advice of leaving all free, of sacrificing all for Living Values. The text "God is Love," when considered in relation to the Christian cosmogony is deserving of Mr. Saphin's contempt, but perhaps it may not appear quite so silly when regarded more imaginatively. Our highest cultural achievements all have been derived from the procreant urge. (Words, words, words, these unreliable symbols have been the cause of how many unnecessary disputes!) All morality had its modest origin in either parental or sexual love, and although the word morality with its conventional associations, is not one that I much care for, it is through its agency expressed through the social contract as Hobbes understood long ago, that we enjoy the paltry freedoms allowed to each one of us. "I and my Father are one," is an utterance taken, I suspect, from the Gospel according to St. John, a flagrant piece of sacerdotal propaganda which we can afford to ignore.

I agree with Mr. Saphin that human civilization had definitely been retarded by "this epidemic of unreason" that we call Christianity, but I also hold the opinion that the teaching of Jesus himself, through the emphasis it put upon the gentler virtues of the human race, made no inconsiderable contribution to our craft of living. It offered also an insidious challenge to the traditional policies of Assyria and Imperial Rome with their Hitler-Mussolini notions of Big fish eat Little fish, snatch as snatch can. The paramount importance of the individual's life-experience was recognized by Jesus, and those of us who believe that the aim of life should always be towards personal happiness may well be grateful for the hint he gave that our intention of living as complete a life as possible may to our own advantage be subject to modifications through the kind of compassion that is to be associated with the sensitive responses of this working man.

LLEWELYN POWYS.

FREETHOUGHT

SIR,—C. Bradlaugh Bonner writes on Masaryk as a defender of Freethought. Is he aware that Masaryk was a party to the persecution of Czech Communists for daring to reprint some of *his own earlier speeches on democracy!* So much for "liberal tolerance" when its political ends are gained.

JACK LINDSAY.

WITCHCRAFT

SIR,—The figures on the punishment for Witchcraft given by Mr. James Whitwell in to-day's *Times*, June 29, are a record of unspeakable and unmerited torture of helpless human beings on an appalling scale. Among the figures given are those of 500 so-called witches "burnt at the stake" in Geneva in three months, and about 100 burnt in the counties of "Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex alone," in 1645. How many of his readers are prepared to face up to the position that but for the backing of religious beliefs such sufferings need never have occurred? These beliefs carried with them the conviction that a malevolent and extremely active Devil was responsible for many of the ills which befell an ignorant populace. It is records such as this which place

Freethought in Religion on a footing which is bound to grow firmer as humanity shakes off one by one the superstitions which always go hand in hand with beliefs in supernatural agencies.

MAUD SIMON.

Obituary

THE LATE ABRAHAM VANDERHOUT

The remains of Abraham Vanderhout were cremated at the City of London Crematorium, on Monday, July 13. A large number of relatives and friends were present, and a Secular Service was conducted by Mr. R. H. Rosetti. An Obituary Notice appeared in our issue of last week.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON

INDOOR

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, W. B. Curry, M.A., B.Sc.—"Religion in the Schools."

OUTDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 6.30, Mr. A. Leacey.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Mr. L. Ebury. Highbury Corner, 8.0, Mr. A. Leacey. South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Monday, July 20, Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 6.30, Mr. E. C. Smith. Rushcroft Road, opposite Brixton Town Hall, 8.0, Tuesday, July 21, Mr. P. Goldman. Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town, 8.0, Friday, July 24, Mr. F. P. Corrigan.

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

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.30, Sunday, Messrs. Bryant, Wood, Evans, Tuson and Connell. 6.30, Messrs. Hyatt, Bryant, Wood, Evans, Tuson, Lacey and Connell. Wednesday, 7.30, Messrs. Wood, Bryant and Tuson. Thursday, 7.30, Mr. E. Wood. 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.

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place): 7.30, Thursday, July 16, Mr. J. Clayton. A Lecture, Literature for sale.

BLYTH (Market): 7.0, Monday, July 20, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

CHESTER-LE-STREET (Bridge End): 8.0, Friday, July 17, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

HOUGHTON-LE-SPRING: 7.0, Tuesday, July 21, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

NELSON (Chapel Street): 8.0, Tuesday, July 21, Mr. J. Clayton.

PRESTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Preston Market Place): 7.30, Mr. J. Clayton—"Some Absurdities of Catholic Truth." READ: 7.30, Monday, July 20, Mr. J. Clayton.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Gill Bridge Avenue): 7.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SWANSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (Outside Benymachn Inn, Benymachn): 7.30, Monday, July 20. The Forum, in front of new Civic Centre, 7.30, Wednesday, July 22 and Friday, July 24. Public meeting place on the sands, 7.30, Sunday, July 21 until Friday, July 31. Mr. Whitehead will speak at each of these meetings.

TRAWDEN: 7.45, Friday, July 17, Mr. J. Clayton.

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H. CUTNER

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A Great Scheme for a Great Purpose

THE *Freethinker* Endowment Trust was registered on the 25th of August, 1925, its object being to raise a sum of not less than £8,000, which, by investment, would yield sufficient to cover the estimated annual loss incurred in the maintenance of the *Freethinker*. The Trust is controlled and administered by five Trustees, of which number the Editor of the *Freethinker* is one in virtue of his office. By the terms of the Trust Deed the Trustees are prohibited from deriving anything from the Trust in the shape of profit, emoluments, or payment, and in the event of the *Freethinker* at any time, in the opinion of the Trustees, rendering the Fund unnecessary, it may be brought to an end, and the capital sum handed over to the National Secular Society.

The Trustees set themselves the task of raising a minimum sum of £8,000. This was accomplished by the end of December, 1927. At the suggestion of some of the largest subscribers, it has since been resolved to increase the Trust to a round £10,000, and there is every hope of this being done within a reasonably short time.

The Trust may be benefited by donations of cash, or shares already held, or by bequests. All contributions will be acknowledged in the columns of this journal, and may be sent to either the Editor, or to the Secretary of the Trust, Mr. W. Ash, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Any further information concerning the Trust will be supplied on application.

There is no need to say more about the *Freethinker* itself, than that its invaluable service to the Freethought Cause is recognized and acknowledged by all. It is the mouthpiece of militant Freethought in this country, and places its columns, without charge, at the service of the Movement.

The address of the *Freethinker* Endowment Trust is 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.