

THE FREETHINKER

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— Founded 1881 —

VOL. LVI.—No. 31

SUNDAY, AUGUST 2, 1936

PRICE THREEPENCE

PRINCIPAL CONTENTS

Page

More About Death—The Editor	- 481
Most Mockable Methods—Mimnermus	- 483
The Finger of God—T. H. Elstob	- 484
Things Worth Knowing	- 485
The Oracles of God.—Pro Reason	- 486
More Objections to Atheism—H. Culner	- 490
A Plea for a Common Front—Jack Lindsay	- 491
The Book Shop—C-de-B.	- 493

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

Views and Opinions

More About Death

LAST week we took the primitive conception of death as something resulting from either magic or the action of a malevolent spirit, as a starting point for gaining a proper view of the nature and function of death in life. The other original circumstance to be borne in mind is the complete inability of the primitive brain, and also in many instances the modern one—which in many aspects is very little removed from the primitive stage—to conceive the absolute dissolution of personality. But these things alone would not have created the morbid fear of death which is so largely present in the modern mind, had it not been for the development of the fear of some form of punishment in an after-life. This received its most brutal and most terrifying expression with the Christian religion, and bearing in mind the constant insistence upon the terrors of the future life, it is not very surprising that in an age when Christianity has lost a deal of its power, the fear of death still holds a fairly firm place, in even the minds of many of those who believe they have outgrown the influence of Christian teaching. Not death itself, but fear of what may happen after death, is responsible for the fear and misunderstanding of death that exists, although by an easy transition the terror excited by what follows death has been identified with death itself.

Death, I have already said, is part of the pageant of life. It has so frequently been said, by those who are unconsciously influenced by religious considerations, that life is set in a background of death, that it is worth while looking at the whole subject from the point of view of death being set in a background of life. Nor do I mean this to be taken as a merely pictorial way of putting the subject. I mean that, as a matter of sober fact, life and death are two aspects of the same thing; they are not fundamentally opposite, they are complementary. Death is "given"

in life, and much, if not all, that makes life worth living is ultimately dependent upon death. It was the great biologist Weismann who suggested that biological death came into being as a factor in animal evolution, and, on the higher level, without death a great deal of what we value most could not exist.

* * *

Man and His Environment

Upon some phases of this aspect of death I need touch but lightly because I have already dealt with them at length in books and articles. All of us are more or less familiar with the fact that every form of animal structure represents an adaptation to a special environment. What is not always so clearly recognized is that this generalization applies as strongly to mental and moral aptitudes. Courage, honesty, love, loyalty, etc., all with their opposites have reference to the human environment on earth, and can have none to any other environment in an assumed after-life, where similar conditions to those of this life do not, theoretically, exist. Negative or positive this relation between every form of development and a given environment is there. And, unless we go back to the primitive conception of another life as a continuation of this in every respect, it is this consideration that makes the theory of an after life such a glaring absurdity.

Let me put the *fact* of death as free as possible from the stupidities involved in the religious conception of death, and what comes after death, and state it in a way that is often stated by those who believe they are free from theological influences and prepossessions. I think that this may fairly be put in terms something like the following:—

Death means, at least the snapping of relations that the best of us value most, a frustration of our greatest hopes and most cherished desires. We marry and procreate, we rear our children and cherish our parents. We form friendships and joy in their reality and in their value. We lay plans and look forward to their realization because we hope that they may contribute to the better life of those around us. We form ideals, live for them and are ready to die for them. And then in the twinkling of an eye, our dearest friends are taken from us; our children, wives, parents and friends die, and in turn we and our ideals vanish from the scene. We may screw our courage to the point of unflinchingly facing this breaking of the dearest ties, but this does not lessen our sorrow, and leaves us still facing death as an unmistakable calamity, it may be with courage, but yet with a recognition that we have been overtaken with disaster.

I think this is putting the case as fairly and as strongly as it can be put, and while many on a superficial view may regard it as final, yet a closer and deeper understanding will show it to be riddled with

fallacy. There is a legend, I forget whether it belongs to ancient or modern times, although it is wise enough to be Greek in origin. A mortal was once given by the gods the opportunity of acquiring absolute knowledge. The man, being wise, declined and preferred the unending quest for truth. I think that states the case for every desire we may have, including the desire that meets us in the shape of love itself. It is the fact that our desires are never completely gratified, and that in whatever degree they are satisfied there is always the possibility of frustration, or of the creation of still further desires; it is this denial of finality that gives them their value. To have a desire gratified the moment we formulate it, to have it gratified, once and for all, would rob us of the very quality that makes desire possible. It might not make life impossible, but it would reduce it to a mere automatic reaction in which consciousness would play no part. We do not desire to breathe, we breathe. To desire breath is the prelude to possible dissolution.

Consider now how firmly every quality of affection that is possible to man is ultimately dependent upon the fact of death. To begin with in a world in which death was not possible birth would be unknown, family life and all that it involves would cease to exist. As I have said in my *Other Side of Death* :—

Birth and death offer the living paradox that while apparently the negation of each other, they are strictly speaking complementary facts. Birth is the other side of death, death is the other side of birth; the significance of the cradle is to be found in the grave, the grave finds its justification in the cradle. On these two complementary facts all human affection centres. . . . What meaning would such terms as husband and wife, parent and child or family have in a world where immortality was a fact and death an unknown thing? And if anyone tries in thought to take away all that is owing to these relationships, what would there be left worth bothering about? There is a limit to the attractiveness of a mere duration of days. The most attractive of things becomes stale in time. There is a saturation point in human affection as there is with the chemical elements. And one might well stand appalled at living age after age with no prospect of termination. If there is anything that would make life an *unendurable horror* it is that.

* * *

Give Us Understanding!

I do not argue against the grief that attaches to death, neither have I any wish to minimize it. I am only insisting on the sanative influence of that grief, and pointing out that we owe to death much that really makes life worth living. It is the insecurity of life, on which the foundations of the love of man and woman, parent and child, of friend for friend rests, and those who rail at the grief that death brings, are railing at the conditions that create the love for those whom we have lost. If we have the vision to look forward, it is because the past has given us that power. To-day goes, to-morrow may never come; all we have with certainty are our yesterdays strung on a rope of memory that yields alternately pain and pleasure. Among these memories, prominent with those of mature years, the memories of our dear dead stand out as so many pure diamonds on a string of imitation stones. They are not mere memories, they are treasured souvenirs of friends, of wife and child or parent, recollections from which time has stripped all that is painful, leaving only a sweet and helpful residue. It is in this way that life may be said to conquer death by recognizing it as part of the pageant of life. The yesterdays that have been are

perpetuated and remain ours; and time robs them of bitterness. We live in them and by them, and death marks the beginning of their purification and sublimation. Death gives a justifiably emotional background to life; it defines life and conditions it. It is religion that has created in man a senseless horror of death, and it is surely the task of a scientific free-thought to provide us with an understanding of the place of death in life.

That is the reason why I have so often protested against the cheapening and vulgarizing of death that inevitably takes place in the carefully staged public performance of a royal funeral, such as occurred at the funeral of King George. The grief of a family that has lost its head, is one thing, the advertised grief of a nation for one whom it knows only as a name, belongs to an entirely different category. It places a respectful regret on the level of a personal grief, and that cheapens the one and foolishly exaggerates the other. And when the whole thing is carefully staged and rehearsed, even to the circus-like training of the horses, the whole thing is vulgarized to an extent that is almost revolting. We are not looking at a manifestation of spontaneous sorrow, but at a carefully arranged "stage show."

I hope that I have now made my position quite clear to my friendly correspondent, and not merely made it clear, but have quite justified what I said. I join with him in all that he may say concerning the pain that brings death, the hopes that are so often shattered, the snapping of bonds that can never be united. But I also realize that it is the very fact that such things accompany death which serve as the seed plot for the affection we have for our dead, and for some of the most valuable emotions of human existence. I think it is something like this that Shelley had in mind when he wrote :—

All things that we love and cherish,
Like ourselves must fade and perish.
Such is our rude mortal lot,
Love itself would did they not.

But above all we require, not the mere courage to face death, but an understanding of death, and there will then be no room for fear. I would place death as part of the pageant of life, which, in spite of all, yields its contribution towards making life what it is. I say also with one greater than Shelley :—

Of all the wonders that I yet have heard,
It seems to me most strange that men should fear;
Seeing that death, a necessary end,
Will come when it will come.

Ignorance and fear are the bases upon which rests man's fear of death. And the cure for that is the rarest of all human possessions—understanding.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Sun Worship

Does the sun know
When the blackbird's wings
Are spread on the grass
For a welcoming?

Hear the sun laugh
"Oh hi! Oh hi!
Flout me or greet me—
Without me you'd die."

CHRISTOPHER GAY.

Most Mockable Methods

"One often sees good intentions, if pushed beyond moderation, bring about very vicious results."

Montaigne.

"Christian mythology contains things which are both insulting and injurious."—J. A. Froude.

At a Conference organized by the Public Morality Council and the Cinema Christian Council at the Central Hall, Westminster, recently, a far more rigid censorship of films children are allowed to see was advocated. These two pious organizations actually go so far as to suggest that the present arrangements prove a grave moral danger for the future generation. Taking up the cudgels on behalf of the alleged danger to children a Mr. G. Kirkham Jones, headmaster of a Battersea School, said:—

Children hate cruelty and bestiality, and drunkenness is no longer a joke with them.

This time, it will be noticed that the films are under fire from the Nosey-Parkers of Nonconformity. They are said to be harming public morals, especially those of young people. In every generation pious busybodies have pretended to discover some similar, or even worse, agency of evil. Puritanical minds have been stirred to hysterical and vociferous anxiety by devices for public entertainment ranging from the old-time Elizabethan drama to the dizzy delights of the modern music-hall. In the old days, bear-baiting and cock-fighting came in for similar denunciation, but, as has been pointed out, "The Puritans objected to bear-baiting, not because it caused pain to the bear, but because it gave pleasure to the beholders." They objected to human happiness and they do so still.

A generation ago the "penny dreadful" was said by these Kill-Joys to be ruining the morals of youth; Sunday excursions were imperilling our existence as a nation; to-day the cinemas of the land, which some twenty million people attend each week, are accused of corrupting child, parent, grandparent and centenarian, impartially. Our contemporary pious Nosey Parkers want to suppress a number of the films now shown, and their new standards will be set by minds of the calibre of Samuel Pecksniff and the Rev. Mr. Stiggins. We know what manner of minds these are, if they can be dignified by such a title. One of their principle ambitions in life is to force upon others their own narrow, lop-sided, parish-pump views of what is right and proper.

The present system of film censorship is not perfect, but few things are. It includes the Board of Film Censors, the police, and the public. To add another censorship of nagging Nosey Parkers would only cause confusion to be worse confounded. The would-be censors' objection to the cinema is that it exhibits scenes of crime, of cruelty, of horror, and of "sex." It takes all sorts to make a world. Doubtless there are some people who would frown upon the representation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, if they reflected that it introduces a bogey, some sex appeal, and the killing of several persons in circumstances of some excitement. Or of a film of "The Forty Thieves," on the ground that it glorified crime.

The general public, however, is less squeamish, less hysterical, and not so thin-skinned as "to die of a rose in aromatic pain." It realizes that the silver screen is not intended solely for the edification of four-square gossellers and the quaint congregations of tin-tabernacles, and other representatives of corybantic Christianity. It also realizes that even on the screen the subjects of crime, of cruelty, and of sex can be presented without offence. And if

offence is given, then the ordinary law provides ample and adequate means to punish the offender.

The most effective regulator of the standard of films is the public taste itself; and the public, which possesses the most potent of all deterrents to the production of films which are in bad or questionable taste—the option of not going to see them—might well be left alone to act as its own censor.

Indeed, the clergy have always had rare noses for indecency. Some time ago a clerical warning was issued, in which these pastors and masters called attention to the alleged danger to the youth of Britain of books, magazines, and plays. And the warning added: "too little care is exercised to exclude them from the lives of the young." Notice how these clergy, and their cats'-paws, wish to rule the roost in matters of public amusement, and literature. Anglican parsons, Free Church ministers, and Romish Priests do not often agree, but when they do so their unanimity is passing wonderful. The Romish priests, however, are the most thorough, for their *Index Expurgatorius* contains the names of most authors worth reading. Indecency, indeed! Clergymen of all denominations attach very loose meanings to the words they fling about so profusely and so recklessly, but how such men can read their own sacred scriptures without remark, and point the finger of scorn at modern novelists, playwrights, and scenario writers, is inexplicable, except on the hypothesis that they are insincere and hypocritical.

It would be a thankless task to enumerate the false, foolish, and even wicked features of the Christian Scriptures, but the fact remains that this alleged sacred volume is full of barbarism from title to colophon, from cover to cover. From the first error in "Genesis" to the final absurdity in the "Book of Revelation," much of the writing is of pathological interest, although presented in exotic forms of verse. In far too many places in the Old Testament the writing is filled with the turmoil of battle, the scuffling of savages, the flashing and bickering of spears. Only on rare occasions does the still, sad voice of humanity make itself heard. As for the overrated and belauded New Testament, the highly evolved moral perceptions of the twentieth century are shocked beyond expression at the truly awful doctrine that countless millions of mankind will suffer eternal torment in fire. In the last analysis it will be noticed that this Oriental scripture, so far from being a final word on anything, is but a savage survival from the bad old days of long ago. It will also be seen that it is not religion which purifies humanity, but humanity which actually cleanses religion. Man civilizes himself, and then civilizes his "gods," and the salaried sons of the gods walk at the tail of the procession, and take the credit and the cash, particularly the money.

To read such venomous allusion to the cinemas, books, and plays of the present day, as if many of them were a noisome danger to society, is startling. When such highly-coloured language comes from the clergy and their cats'-paws, who thrust the open Bible into the hands of innocent childhood, one's sense of justice and decency is outraged. For there are many most objectionable things in the sacred volume, written with all the particularity and love of detail, which is a characteristic of almost all Oriental writers. The florid, heated rhetoric of, for example, "The Song of Solomon," and "The Psalms of David," leave little to the imagination, and the least-lettered reader can appreciate the glowing periods. As a fact, some portions of these "Psalms" have been actually deleted from the Church of England official Prayer Book, simply because they are utterly out of

harmony with modern morality and common decency.

The overt action of the clergy directed against films is largely a matter of business rivalry and trade jealousy. The Sunday opening of cinemas in so many towns has markedly affected the attendances at places of worship, and the clergy wish to discredit their rivals. They view with intense disfavour every sixpence that is spent at the cinema, and realize that their own "show" is not so attractive as that of their competitors. The matter is not so simple as it appears, for it raises the entire question as to the real usefulness of these clergy as a sacred caste apart from their fellows. For the clergy are not only opposed to the idea of liberty, but have always striven to restrict the happiness of their fellow-men. "These are the times that try men's souls," and little use can be made of the mummeries of two thousand years ago, presented by a company of charlatans. Let us leave the clergy to stage their farewell tour in the old rôle of their world-famous play, "The Wolf in Sheep's Clothing."

MIMNERMUS.

The Finger of God

"And when the magicians saw the lice, they said, 'This is the finger of God.'"—*Exodus viii.*

At the Little Theatre, Miss Nancy Price is presenting *The Insect Play*, by the Brothers Carl and Josef Capek, the Czech dramatists. This is not the first time this play has been produced in England. It was put on at the Regent Theatre a few years after the War, and to one member of the audience at least, it proved a rousing and unforgettable work. The People's National Theatre is responsible for the production in this case. It is splendidly done, and although there are differences noticeable between the two performances, the honours rest with this production. Miss Price, for instance, in the impressive Act which deals with the war between the Black and Yellow Ants, has dispensed with the endless chain of supers answering the call for "men," and "more men," which was a feature of the first production, and the "effect," a constant cannonade, has been cut out. These things have, however, been adequately and artistically suggested, but it is doubtful whether the broad effectiveness of the act has not been lessened by dispensing with such concrete aids to the understanding.

The play is based on the *Insect Studies* of J. H. Fabre. These form charming volumes. The life history of any insect in his hands was as entertaining as a romance, and was related with a grace and an orderly and logical unfolding that compelled admiration. But Fabre possessed a theology as well as being a patient and thoughtful observer, and although this was not obtruded, it obviously led to many of his digressions. It led him also into occasional errors of observation, errors which are inevitable unless the mind is cleared of prejudice. Again and again he introduced into his script, material to prove that insects move only along lines of established routine, and to show that if this routine were disturbed, the creatures were perfectly helpless. Man, of course, was different. In what respect it is difficult to make out. The tramp in this play, a spectator of the antics of the insects, an ordinary receptacle of hopes, prejudices and preconceptions, tries naturally to make distinctions of the same kind, but could not manage it. We feel that Fabre was anxious all the time to find differences that would justify a Scheme

of Salvation, Adam and Eve, the Garden and the Apple, Original Sin and the rest of the bag of tricks. Man was given Free Will, you see, and because of that he plumped deliberately for Sin and incurred the Wrath of God. But not so the insects, showed Fabre. They have neither intelligence nor free will. They are as God made them, direct from the celestial pattern shops. In their case there has been no fall from a pristine state of Grace; they represent God, pure and undefiled. Yet none knew better than Fabre the unpleasantness of God's handiwork. Holy Writ advises the sluggard to "Go to the ant; consider her ways and be wise," and from the Theistic point of view this seems quite sensible general advice. And yet if we try to find the foreshadowings of, say, the Blessed State of Holy Matrimony from the behaviour of those straight from the divine foundry, we find the husband-eating Spiders and Beetles; we have the Praying Mantis, that unspeakable illustration of redness in tooth and claw, that creature which devours her husband, even in the act of the passionate embrace. Fabre sees no difficulty of this kind, so keen is he in showing, by implication, that man is the paragon of animals. If he saw any difficulty, he skipped lightly over it. With no thesis to maintain, the brothers Capek are content to give us the facts, introducing, as commentator, a tramp spectator of a little more than average thoughtfulness, puzzled, nay, sickened, by the absence of any line of justice or benevolence running through the scheme.

Our tramp, lying in a drunken slumber on an open common, is roused by the antics of one of God's paragons at work. This is a butter-fly catcher. The tramp's amusement at the serious air of the gentleman with the net leads to a few questions, the answers to which only increase his bewilderment. He relapses into unconsciousness and is then favoured by a vision of the "playing" of butterflies with all its amative significance, and consequent pleasure, pain and tragedy. There is nothing in the view of the female butterfly in this act to which Schopenhauer would have taken exception. Next he sees Mr. and Mrs. Dung Beetle with their ball of dung, "their little pile." He notes the labour it has taken to accumulate; the worship they give it; the worry that springs from it. "And what now?" queries Mrs. Beetle. "We'll make another—perhaps three," gloatingly responds her spouse, the joy of possession overwhelming him. They leave the pile momentarily to secure a suitable warehouse. Then up comes another beetle just as God had made him, shockingly devoid of ethical sense, and appropriates the pile, the result being satisfactory to the beetle without conscience, but to him alone.

Then he is favoured with a touching example of parental love in the shape of the Ichneumon Fly, who believes in the doctrine of hard work in order to keep wife and weans happy. He leaves his hole brimming over with energy and cheerfulness, in order to do a little killing so that more food may drop into the capacious maw of a bored and insatiable larva. Then enter the newly-weds, Mr. and Mrs. Cricket, chirring for joy, and enthusing over nidification. Mr. Cricket leaves his popsy-wopsy for a while to make a few purchases in the shape of curtains and other household ornamentations. Mr. Ichneumon Fly comes back, gives Mrs. Cricket the happy despatch, and flings her to his larva, impressing upon his child that as she has a kind, hard-working daddy she need only help herself to the tit-bits. When she is replete, Mr. Cricket unfortunately returns only to make another meal for an already gorged offspring. Such a kind, industrious, unselfish daddy has she got.

Our tramp is not enjoying this at all. It is ob-

vious that if he had been able to mould things to his Heart's Desire, Mrs. Cricket would have had her curtains, and a bevy of young crickets would have chirped on her hearth. Mr. Ichneumon Fly would probably have been omitted altogether from the world of his moulding. He reflects:—

Thank 'eaven! These 'cathen insect's may be vile,
But man—man's different. Folks like me an' you
Work 'ard, and makes our little pile. . . .
Blast! I'm all mixed. That's what them beetles do.
It's what I say—man 'as ideals and dreams
And family love. 'Is purpose—put it plain—
Is keepin' up the race. . . . 'Ullo though—seems
I've got them crickets fairly on the brain.
Bold—that's what man is: resolute, yer might s'y.
If 'e wants more, 'e does his neighbour in. . . .
O 'ell. That makes 'im like the murderous fly. . . .
But there you are, 'oo can think straight on gim?

Then a thought comes:—

What's wrong about
Them insect's, if you think it out,
Is, they've no feller-feelin'. Each
Jest for 'isself is what they preach,
Thinks 'e's the world, 'e does. My 'at!
These insect's all be'aves like that.
Ridic'ulous creatures! Jest can't see
'Ow small they looks to you and me. . . .
They make me tired.

And an inspiration:—

Gorblimey, if I 'aven't struck
The truth! Now, there's a bit of luck.
Insect's won't work together. Man
Will. 'E can form a general plan.
There's something great in 'im what fights
And perishes for the nation's rights.

I've 'it it! That's what makes man great.
Givin' their lives up for the State!
Man's not 'alf noble—put it straight.

It makes you think o' them ole scenes,
With star-shells over'ead
The night we left a thousand dead
And keptured two latrines.

It is at this point, in order, presumably, to upset his complacency, that he is favoured with a disturbing revelation of the life of the ant. The *Black Ants*, convinced of their fitness for world domination; who are possessed of a microphone passion for Peace; who act on the slogan (microphone slogan) of "All for the whole and the whole for all," and who yet, paradoxically enough, find themselves surrounded by enemies. Owing to their pacific (microphone) principles they have defeated the white ants and starved out the brown, and subjected the greys—and now only the yellows are left. All they hope for now is a Cause for war. This soon comes from a yellow ant or two having been found on a pathway between two blades of grass belonging (perhaps), to the *Black Ants*. Then Pandemonium! The battle goes on, "according to plan." The *Black Ants* at one point, thinking they are victorious, and the pathway between the two blades of grass is theirs, return thanks unto the "Most Righteous God of the *Black Ants*, who knowest that we fight only for justice and our national honour." It proves, however, a premature report; the *Yellow Ants* return victoriously from the fray, and prayers then are offered in almost identical terms to the God of the *Yellow Ants*.

Says our friend the tramp, to the Dictator of the *Yellow Ants*, "Bah, Yer insect, yer insect"—and stamps him out. It is evident that one must not put on human nature more than it can bear.

The *Insect Play* has already had a good run. It cannot run too long.

T. H. ELSTON.

Things Worth Knowing*

XI.VIII.

MORALS AND MAN

We are constantly being reminded that ever since the last war man has been in a transition period; that the old moral and religious sanctions have lost their force; and that youth to-day is frankly contemptuous of the old pious catch-words and dull banalities which, for the fathers and mothers, too often took the place of individual judgment as guides to conduct. No doubt every period is one of transition, and the present time is remarkable solely because the evolution of ideas is proceeding at such a pace that one cannot shut the eyes to it. And the primitive in us says, alas that anything should ever change, and that we should encounter anything new—alas that youth should think! Sad it is, however, we cannot blink the fact that some of the old conventional morality is already in the dust-bin, and more will probably follow. All we can do is to speculate as to what goal of conduct a more critical and honest point of view will reveal. Of one thing we can be sure; any new theory of morality will have to be based upon a firmer foundation than superstition or conventional ethics; it will have to be capable of withstanding the most searching hostile criticism; and it must promise to bring satisfactions—a profit, as William James would call it—here and now to those who practice it.

. . . Man is the outcome of an evolutionary process, during the course of which his physical organs and his psychic capacities and tendencies have unfolded together. This division into physical and psychical is an artificial one; it is convenient to make the separation for purposes of study; but a man himself is a unit, even with all his complexity. The self is the entire man, physical and psychical. The self is a polity and thrives when all the lesser units composing it function in a balanced manner. Each self, in turn, is a unit in the group; and the welfare of each individual is most intimately bound up with that of the group to which he belongs, for human society is far and away the most important feature of every man's natural environment.

The further back towards primitivity we trace human society, the more do we find it survives only through unhesitating co-operation and mutual burden-bearing. The less culture a group has the closer must this symbiosis be. The more primitive a group is, the more, of necessity, must its members in order to survive devote themselves to what are called the virtues of altruism and self-sacrifice. Since these sub-conscious aids to co-operation are found among various animals and plants, a broader term is needed than altruism and self-sacrifice, and it is convenient to call such mutual helpfulness biomorality. Biomorality is a direct product of evolution, of the struggle to survive; it has only an indirect relation to conventional morality, which is merely a matter of the accepted fashion in a given group.

All the anthropological evidence available goes to show that man has always been a social animal, and that it is not until he has a comparatively complex culture that egoistical tendencies begin to appear and to lead him to satisfy desires at the expense of his original biomorality. . . . The time when a

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

child begins to develop egoistical tendencies is precisely the time when it commences to comprehend that it is an ego, the period when self-consciousness dawns. A child cannot set its own will consciously against the will of its parents before it begins to be conscious of itself as something distinct from its family group. Its social virtues develop during the period of its original identity with its parents; its rebellion against the family group appears as this identity is dissolved by psychic unfolding from within. Thereafter the child is prevented from becoming an irresponsible egotist only by a system of prohibitions and rewards imposed by the family group. Exactly the same course of evolution has been followed by the human race; so long as the primitive and original condition of identity with the group persists, the social qualities are supreme; and the all-powerful social instinct easily confines other instincts within ritual channels. But when this identity begins to wear thin the group unconsciously develops a system of rewards and taboos. That is, certain conduct is accepted as being correct, entitling all who conform to it to the fullest confidence of the group and all the help the group can give; while transgression of this conduct makes the sinner taboo. This marks the birth of conventional morality, which aids the *apparently* dwindling biomorality. The conventional morality, in so far as it consists of duties that must be committed, are the positive and negative aspects of custom. Custom covers what we moderns have divided into good manners, legal rights and duties, and religion.

. . . In our study of taboos we have seen that *what* the taboo is—in the matter of sexual relations, for instance—makes absolutely no difference at all. The only important thing is that there shall be *some* taboo. . . . Whether the rule is monogamy, polygamy, polyandry, unlimited promiscuity before marriage, with monogamy afterwards, the custom of wife-lending to a friend or an honoured guest, or any other form of conventional morality, the one vital thing is, for imperfectly conscious savages, that there should be some conventional morality, some standard ensuring uniformity in conduct. So long as consciousness has not developed to such a point among the members of a group that individuality can be tolerated, so long as the dead level of savage Socialism is the most workable form of social organization, conventional morality there must be. For without individuality there can be no individual responsibility towards the group, no individual morality. All social groups feel the *horror novi* toward any member who varies from the norm, and all groups therefore discourage that surpassing the norm which constitutes individuality; the more primitive the group the more naturally does it repress individuality. . . . In self-defence the group resists individuality. It is possible for a man to develop his consciousness to the point when he consciously turns his interest upon the group, as the supreme factor of supreme importance in his environment, and gives his love and labour to this super personal entity. But this means a very high degree of individuality . . . a true individual morality.

. . . In so far as I can interpret the evidence of anthropology and psychology, I believe this to be the general course of man's psychic evolution. He begins with unconsciousness, when he is biomoral simply because the instinct to co-operate is stronger than any other instinct: he becomes imperfectly conscious, whereupon anti-social, egoistical urges appear, and make it necessary for the group to establish and enforce norms of conduct, or conventions; and more and more he will approach full-consciousness, full in-

dividuation, and full individual self-control and responsibility. As he does this, as the race becomes adult, the necessity for being morally controlled from without will progressively disappear.

The Primitive Mind and Modern Civilization,
by C. R. ALDRITCH, pp. 226-232.

The Oracles of God

SMITH: "I have always been told that the Holy scriptures were written by men, inspired by God, and that they are the standard by which our actions should be regulated."

Robinson: "Do you know who these writers were?"

S.: "Most of the books bear the names of their authors, do they not?"

R.: "Would you be surprised to hear that it is generally admitted by biblical scholars that the writers of a very considerable portion of the holy book, including the four gospels, are unknown? What is known, however, is that Moses did not compile the Pentateuch. Joshua did not write the book bearing his name. Samuel was not the author of the first and second books of Samuel; the Psalms were not written by David; Solomon did not write the Proverbs or the Song; and Isaiah was not responsible for the book named after him."

S.: "You surprise me. I have always been under the impression that all the writers could be identified."

R.: "Have you ever taken the trouble thoroughly to examine the subject with the aid of books and other literature which criticize the foundation of historic Christianity, and have you STUDIED the Bible?"

S.: "I confess that my acquaintance with the latter does not extend beyond listening, somewhat inattentively, to the recital of the lessons in church on Sundays. I have never studied any literature opposed to the Christian religion, because my people would be shocked if they knew I was doing so, and I do not wish to injure their feelings."

R.: "Just as mine were when I started upon the great adventure of investigating, for my own satisfaction, the truth, or otherwise, of the stories of the Creation, Adam and Eve, the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection and Ascension, and the many other stupendous events recorded in the Bible. Upon reflection I decided not to allow the prospect of domestic unhappiness deter me in my search for the truth. Say what you will, this disinclination to offend friends and relatives, is a serious obstacle to enlightenment."

S.: "What literature did you enlist to your help?"

R.: "The books are too numerous to mention, but Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason*, Ingersoll's lectures and essays, Draper's *The Conflict Between Religion and Science*, Chapman Cohen's *Letters to the Lord*, *Letters to a Country Vicar*, Haeckel's *The Riddle of the Universe*, Jocelyn Rhys's *The Virgin Birth Doctrine*, and *The Resurrection Doctrine*, and Vivian Phelps's *The Churches and Modern Thought*, impressed me immensely. Also I acquired much useful information by reading the instructive articles in the *Freethinker*, a weekly paper published by The Pioneer Press, London."

S.: "Did they disturb your preconceived ideas on the subject?"

R.: "Not only did they disturb them, but they changed entirely my mental outlook upon religion. I recommend you to read them and also to STUDY the Bible. Very few people read the Bible (to say nothing of studying it) which must be the reason it is considered by so many to be such a wonderful book. As a matter of fact, it is a vastly overrated production and needs merely a thorough sifting by its adherents to make Christianity automatically to be numbered among the religions of the past."

S.: "Are you more satisfied now than you were when you believed in the Christian religion; that is to say, are you happier?"

R.: "Certainly. I have acquired valuable knowledge denied to those who are too timorous to seek for the truth outside of their own restricted circle where biblical criticism is taboo, and consequently my mind has been freed from the shackles of superstition, aptly described by Ingersoll as the child of ignorance, the mother of misery, and the enemy of liberty. In short, I find that light is more agreeable to me than darkness. What prompted you to ask the question?"

S.: "I have heard clergymen say that all who abandon God must inevitably be unhappy."

R.: "The customary demeanour of the average Freethinker demonstrates clearly that a denial of Christianity does not lead to unhappiness. What you heard was merely one of the many stereotyped insincere warnings disseminated by the clergy to intimidate the people into submission to their will."

PRO REASON.

Acid Drops

When a country reaches the point at which a number of military officers and a refugee ex-King, allied with the Church, decide whether a Government that has been properly elected shall or shall not be permitted to function, it has reached almost the lowest possible point. Spain is just now giving the world an illustration of what follows in such a situation, and Freethinkers who remember the case of Ferrer, and those with longer memories, will recall the way in which Church and throne united to reduce and keep Spain on the lower level of national life. Some of our newspapers have reacted to the revolution as one would expect from what one knows of their nature and history. Perhaps the *Daily Express*, as usual, managed to touch bottom. When the Government, finding itself with a military revolution on its hands, took the sensible course of arming the people, and leaving them to defend the Government it had chosen, the *Express* announced the news as arming the "rabble." The people were the rabble; the Church, the monarchy, living on the plunder it had taken from their country, and a group of military men, formed the "nation."

As is fairly usual in such cases reports followed the customary lines. The "rabble," made up of men and women, was engaged in killing everyone out of hand, and the fanciful pictures of the French 1789 Revolution were revived for the benefit of foolish British readers. That the revolting officers had threatened with extermination those of the "rabble" that did not lay down their arms, was not mentioned by some of our papers. Another tale was that British visitors were forced by the "rabble" to take guns and fire on Royalists. Interviewed by other papers, visitors denied any such thing. Then the burning of churches was reported, but nothing was said of the use made of the Churches by the anti-Government brigands. And in the *Daily Telegraph* for July 28, Mr. Underhill, informs that paper:—

On Sunday a Fascist sniper and a priest took up a position in the belfry of a church adjoining our hotel. The doors of the Church were barricaded and the Government forces could not enter. For two days the two took heavy toll of life from the street below. They were attacked unsuccessfully by three planes with spluttering machine guns. Then the street-fighters set fire to the church. The two men were burnt to death before our eyes.

This certainly lends colour to the statements by the "rabble" that the churches had been used for the storage of arms to be used against the Government.

The most contemptible utterance, and the most scoundrelly one, came from the ex-King Alfonso. He told a representative of the *Standard* that Spain would never be quiet until the "left was completely exterminated"—this from a man of the character of Alfonso, living in safety on the booty he had taken from Spain,

and who runs no risks, but says he is ready to go back, when he is called—that is when his worthless skin can be guaranteed safety. We hold no plea for the "left," but when a man announces that had he the power he would "exterminate" all those who hold an opinion to which he objects, to call him a criminal lunatic is to use a mercifully gentle term. It is getting to be too much of a fashion to justify any kind of forcible suppression so long as it is directed against Communism. We are not writing thus in defence of Communism, but of something that is of far greater consequence.

The Rev. "Dick" Sheppard complains that people try to dodge the parson when he calls to see what help he can be to them. We venture to help Mr. Sheppard by suggesting two reasons for this. The first is that the parson is nearly always visiting those who receive his visits under false pretences. His excuse for visiting is that he goes to help them. The real cause of his visit is that he wishes to see them lined up as customers for his "gospel-shop." His object is not to be helpful in a secular way, but to get hold of them religiously. His conduct is like that of a traveller in vacuum-cleaners trying to persuade a housekeeper that his sole desire is to benefit the one whom he is persuading to purchase. To-day the parson is in most houses under false pretences. He is there to capture customers for his own place of business.

The second reason is that the parson's unmasked-for visit is a piece of sheer impertinence. Consider the impudence of the average parson, not over-blessed with intelligence, with but an indifferent education (although burdened with a liberal dose of misdirected instruction) calling unmasked upon a man with the enquiry as to whether he can help him to solve any problem that is troubling him. No layman would venture on such an impertinent proceeding, and if he did he would soon be shown the door. Once upon a time the parson entered a man's house in virtue of his being a parson, and whatever one may think of the procedure it was at least straightforward. To-day that claim will no longer serve, so a plea of a desire to be of help is put forward. It is time that the parson realized that to educated, or intelligent people the parson to-day is just a not over-bright specimen of the educated public, and that average members of the public are better able to give instruction than is the parson.

Parsons at their wits-end to discover methods to draw people into their churches are more and more adopting the publicity courses hitherto confined to lay purposes. Following the recent inauguration of a "clinic" for combining faith-healing with professional medical treatment, there comes a new minister to the City Temple prepared to psycho-analyse the flock, and to enlighten girls on sex matters. "Famous medical men" are to co-operate with him, together with "psychologists and ministers," chortles a "Liberal" evening paper. Some reliable records of "Cures by Faith" may be anticipated shortly if qualified medical men lend themselves to this sort of thing. But only pseudo-psychology and pseudo-medicine could so aid religion in prostituting scientific and natural processes of treatment.

A young misanthrope (aged 29) inveighed against women and marriage in the columns of a competition paper last week, and prizes were offered for readers' opinions thereon. A winner of five-shillings was the Rev. W. H. Dowling of Llanishen, Cardiff. "As a bachelor parson," he wrote, "with many years of dealing with domestic tangles, I know Mr. R. is right. The main fault is that the modern girl will not conform to the Biblical command to obey her husband—and be subject to him. . . . Men must be masters. That is good psychology and sound theology." The Rev. Dowling evidently belongs to the robust *manly* type of Christianity. To such manliness, obedience in a woman will always appear admirable.

The Vicar of Woolcott Park, Bristol, believes that if men and women won't go to Church, the Church must go to them. Consequently he inserts notices like this in his Parish Magazine:—

The vicar will be glad to see anyone seeking discussion or advice on spiritual or other personal matters at the following times and places in June:—

June	3	(7 to 8)	in the Church.
"	10	(7 to 8)	in the Vicarage.
"	13	(6 to 7)	in the Church.
"	16	(8 to 9)	at the Clyde Arms Hotel.
"	17	(8 to 9)	at the Kensington Hotel.
"	19	(8 to 9)	at the Shakespeare Hotel.
"	24	(6 to 7)	at the Vicarage.

We suggest as a subject for discussion how it happens that God makes Man, Beer and a Plan of Salvation, providing the Plan of Salvation with so little cogency and attractiveness that a man won't leave his glass of beer to hear about it.

The *New Campaigner* informs us:—

A silver bag for collecting gifts will be sent on request to the Hon. Treasurers, The Temperance Council of the Christian Churches, at Percira House, Westminster, to whom they should be returned during December.

If the Temperance Council of the Christian Churches faithfully carry out their part of the undertaking, the number of returns during December is likely to prove disappointing.

The Vicar of St. Augustine's, Bournemouth, realizes that holiday-makers are not likely to leave their amusements to go to Church, so he is holding special evening services at nine o'clock. Evidently it is absurd to think that the Good News of Christ and Him Crucified has any chance of being listened to when beach amusements are in competition. The *News-Chronicle* commends such enterprise. It is only a sleepy conservatism, it says, that won't look facts in the face. The sleepiness of the congregation at that hour is another factor which does not appear to have been looked in the face. But a little more or less of that, it may be argued, is of no consequence.

The *Daily Telegraph* is not one whit behind the other "national" papers when it comes to boosting up Christianity. It devoted a special leader, the other day, in a paean of joy at the crowded churches in London. There used to be a wail of despair at the empty churches in days gone by, but thank God, the people are realizing their mistake and now "practically all the Churches visited by our representatives at the morning service, whether Anglican, Roman Catholic, or Nonconformist, were filled, some of them to a point at which worshippers had to stand." The *Daily Telegraph* is delighted to think that the widespread idea that "there had been a growing indifference to religion" is now quite out-of-date, and insists "that there is probably a greater public than ever before for those ministers who can give to congregations the inspiration they seek."

We doubt very much whether there is any greater public than before for religion; though it may be true that a brilliant minister may often attract a large following. But whether this be so or not, the crowded churches, even in a small area of London, show that the fight for Freethought must not be relaxed for a moment. It may seem incredible to us that huge congregations can be got together to hear the "old, old story," that people still believe in miracles and the other nonsense of Christianity. But if it is a fact, then our work is still of the most vital necessity. We still have to insist upon some "Bible-banging."

Although the *Church Times* "rejoiced" at the "enthusiasm" displayed at a recent meeting of the Church Union, it nonetheless was severely critical of some of the resolutions passed there. "Remarks," for instance, "about bishops were very unwise." "The resolution in favour of an extension of Reservation was unhappily worded." And "the theology of certain observations"

was "mischievous to a degree." One speaker is severely called to task because he said that "the Incarnate Life of God on earth cannot be separated from the Blessed Sacrament." The *Church Times* says "it both can be and is—by no less a fact that the Incarnate God's ascension into Heaven." This is the kind of thing which is seriously discussed by so-called reasonable men. It makes one almost despair of human intelligence.

The same religious journal devotes a whole page with illustrations to the recent excavations on the site of Lachish. It is supposed to give a resumé of "Life in the Judean Kingdom." Yet a careful reading of this page shows that whatever was found, there was nothing at all which proves any incident in the Bible. What does "a seal of haematite showing a deity enthroned holding a sceptre in his hand with the symbol of the moon crescent and the sun and a rampant animal" prove? What does the finding of "a bronze statuette of Reshef, the Syrian war god" show? Not a word of Hebrew has been discovered on anything appertaining to Jehovah or Abraham or Moses. And yet this digging up of bits of old bronzes is put forward constantly as proving the "truth" of the Bible!

Another kind of religious play was enacted in Belfast when the usual annual celebrations against Popery took place. Mobs of Orangemen sang the Orange anthem "Dolly's Brae," which "contains insulting reference to the Blessed Virgin, each verse ending with the elegant slogan, 'Kick the Pope.' The mob responded with vigour, putting especial energy into the slogan."

The mob also yelled, "We want another Cromwell, bring back the Black and Tans." And the "Billy Boys" sent out threatening letters to Catholics, and even threw a bomb into a house. All of which is proof how Christians love one another, and how gentle and civilizing is true Christianity.

In an interview, Mr. R. O. Rohme, who has just been released from a Nazi prison, said that "Hitler and his gang are conducting a definite campaign against Catholicism. You must stop regarding Hitler as even a nominal Catholic. In a radio speech he said, 'I am neither Catholic nor Protestant. I am German.' Hitler is, in fact, Pagan. He is investing the old German gods with new horrors." It would not be too difficult, we think, to commemorate some of the horrors investing Christianity; however. Mr. Rohme is very cut up about the attacks on his religion in Germany. He concluded the interview by claiming that, "Fear rules Germany to-day." Fear seems to be the principal weapon of all dictatorships—religious as well as secular.

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?

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- G. TOMLINSON.—Pleased to hear that you have managed to do your "bit," by finding a new subscriber.
- A. HANSON.—A capital letter, and its value was emphasized by the editor refusing insertion. If newspaper editors do not protect the clergy against criticism they will have a very bad time indeed. And, after all, the Archdeacon of Monmouth was really right, from the Christian point of view, in denouncing Secularism as the greatest of all sins. Religiously it is. That is one of its claims to favourable notice. Sending the Annual Report of the N.S.S. was a capital idea.
- L.H.—You will find what you want in *Christianity and Mythology*, by John M. Robertson. We have a very high opinion of the work of Mr. Robertson. Even in disagreement the intelligent reader cannot but profit.
- A. RICHELL.—Letter passed on to business manager. Thanks for new subscriber.
- J. MCK.—You do not give the name of the member of the N.S.S. whom you say spoke of the £500 Mr. Cohen draws annually from the *Freethinker*. He must be a very clumsy kind of a liar, and if you can supply us with his name we will deal with him. Our chief complaint is, however, that it is not true. But if anyone is willing to place the *Freethinker* in such a position that it can pay Mr. Cohen £500 a year for his multiple services, which he thinks he earns, he will gladly take it.
- F.R.E.—Your suggestion for a series of articles noted. May adopt it later.
- R. T. JENKINSON.—The opinion of the newspaper correspondent that the rain during the Plymouth Fair Week was due to God's displeasure with the use made of the fair ground, proves, as you say, that there are some genuine Christians about still. As we have often pointed out Christianity has reached the point when sincerity of genuine belief is only possible with stupidity.
- H. THOMPSON.—Of course we might convert Christians to Freethought by never saying anything which they found unpleasant. We might soothe a hungry tiger by tickling his whiskers or offering him nicely decorated menu cards. A lot of things are possible in this curious world of ours.
- For Distributing and Circulating the *Freethinker*.—D. C. P. Phelps (India), 5s.; Don Fisher, 4s.
- D. FISHER.—We have no hesitation in revising our statement that "No modern man would regard it as an act of intolerance because the law declares that drains must be kept clean," etc., to read "Few modern men" only we should place ourselves amongst the "most." Still, it takes all sorts to make a world.
- "A."—Next week.
- W.L.E.—Paper is being sent. Will get the newspaper and see what it is worth.
- R. BELL.—We should be only too pleased to act on your suggestion, and if our readers will join in the "Circulation Drive," we would certainly carry it into effect. We are very pleased to hear from you, and remember well the old days in your district.
- J. HUMPHRIES.—We had not the slightest intention of suggesting that an offence had been committed. But some subjects are really too silly for serious treatment unless they lead to something beyond. We are always glad to receive cuttings.
- TED SMITH.—We have read your letter with interest, and agreed with more of it than is the case with most of your communications. Sorry to learn you have been unwell.
- T. H. PERKINS.—Some *Wayside Sermons* were published some time ago in these columns. They may be resumed. We are obliged for suggestion.
- C. TUSON.—Next week. Crowded out this week.

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.

Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

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

When the services of the National Secular Society in connexion with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary R. H. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.

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

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

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

Sugar Plums

Owing to the dislocation in our machine-room last week we omitted to publish a letter from Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner, dealing with a statement made by Mr. Jack Lindsay, concerning President Masaryk and his relation to the Communists. Fortunately, a letter from Czechoslovakia was published asking the same question as was put by Mr. Bonner. Mr. Lindsay answers the question in this issue.

We have again to thank those who have written us with respect to our "Circulation Drive." But there is still a great deal to be done. Meanwhile we again remind all that we are asking to have our twenty-one years editorship of the *Freethinker* marked by each one getting a new reader, and to do so by taking an extra copy until the new subscriber has been found. It amounts to an extra threepence per week until this not very colossal feat is accomplished.

At the Centenary Meeting in honour of Joseph Chamberlain, at the Albert Hall, Sir Austen Chamberlain touched upon his father's work for Education, and summarized it in the following terms:—

He was amongst the first of the Radicals to preach that it was right for every child to have the elements of education free, in schools where the religious convictions of the parents might be respected.

It is this faculty of *suggestio falsi* that is responsible for the general disrespect nowadays paid to the utterances of "responsible" politicians. One would not gather from the above (as it was intended should not be gathered), that Joseph Chamberlain wished to make it impossible for religious teaching to be treated with either respect or disrespect in the Nation's Schools, and that by the simple and just method of taking the subject out of the curriculum altogether.

In 1872, he said:—

Let the State keep to its proper work and fit its children to take their places as citizens of a great empire, and let it leave their religious training, and all that concerns their education for the kingdom which is not of this world, to the care of the churches and the responsibility of the parents.

It may be said that this statement is a relic of Chamberlain's radical days. Thirty years after, at a meeting of the Liberal Unionists at Birmingham, October, 1902, he expressed himself as follows:—

I endeavoured to persuade my countrymen that the only logically just solution of the great education difficulty was that the national schools should confine themselves entirely to secular instruction, and should have nothing whatever to do with religious teaching. I should be delighted if I thought that that were acceptable to the majority of the people.

Nothing could be expressed more clearly. Suppression of the vital word on the important occasion, was not one of the vices of Mr. Joseph Chamberlain.

An article in the *Star* gives reasons why Sir John Reith should be retained as Director-General of the British Broadcasting Corporation. Most of it savours to us as "damning with faint praise." As Sir John's father was Moderator of the United Free Church of Scotland, in Glasgow, it has been a sad blow to him to give way on the subject of Sunday Programmes, and "he is considering his resignation." As he is a Calvinist, and as Calvin's views on divorce were very strict, Sir John, we are told, applies Calvinistic ferocity to divorced people on his staff. Still, things will be all right, writes Mr. Morris, if he will only "temper his wary-eyed reticence with more humanity." The trouble, of course, is, that Calvinism and Humanity don't mix.

There is no reason why Sir John's *Presbyterianism* should stand in his way of holding a public appointment—that is his own affair. What does matter is that he has so little regard for the ethics implied in holding such a public appointment, which should restrain him in decency from forcing his *Presbyterianism* upon persons who don't want it, and in addition calling upon these very people to pay their share of the bill. This is elementary and the severest criticism of Sir John Reith lies in the fact that he doesn't appear to know it.

Although there is no Branch of the N.S.S. in Bath, a local member of the Society, and staunch supporter of the movement, is responsible for arrangements enabling Mr. G. Whitehead to hold meetings each evening for the week commencing to-day (August 2). Details will be found in the Lecture Notices column. The effort is deserving of the support of all local saints, and we hope the ultimate result will be the formation of a Branch of the N.S.S. in Bath.

More Objections to Atheism

A RECENT article of mine dealing with the above subject brought me a number of appreciative letters, and in particular one which I propose to deal with now. It is always interesting to hear from correspondents, especially if one has helped a little to solve their problems. I know, in my own case, how Foote, and Ingersoll, and Bradlaugh, helped me to understand the religious question, and how their brilliant analysis of Christian apologetics showed me its absurdities and illogicalities. I have always felt that, if in the light of pure reason, as far as it was possible for me to use and understand reason, I could not meet the Theistic case, it was my duty to go over to Theism. That is how I feel over other questions also—those, for example, dealing with economics. The instant that I cannot effectively reply to an opponent, it means, for me, that he has got a case that requires looking into; and I like pondering over his arguments and seeing whether his case is better than mine. If it is, I am logically bound to give in and go over to his side. It is not the case with me that convinced against my will, I am of the same opinion still.

At the same time, there are often side issues quite irrelevant to the main question. One can, for example, reply to many main points, and one's opponent may continually bring up minor ones with the assertion that he has not yet been answered.

Take Mr. Beverley Nichols and his *Fool Hath Said*. I have been reproached with the fact that in my criticism of this book, I did not deal with the "splendid chapters" showing how Jesus was a thorough pacifist, hating war quite as much as Mr. Nichols

himself. Well, supposing Jesus *was* a pacifist, and that many of his utterances show him condemning the use of arms—what then? Does this prove that he was born of a virgin, that he worked miracles, that he rose from the dead? For it cannot be too often asserted, it is *not* Jesus the pacifist that Mr. Nichols and his like want us to worship, it is Jesus the God. A pacifist, just an ordinary man opposed to war, would never have been worshipped as a God by Christians or anybody else.

Moreover, the views of Jesus about war do not matter at all. He knew very little about anything, and he was never in any war as a combatant. The ordinary common European soldier in the last war was a far better judge of the horrors of war than Jesus could have been; and those that survived loathed it for its bestiality and stupidity from practical experience and not because Jesus said anything about it. Thus, what Jesus said about war, even supposing we grant all that Mr. Nichols has said, proves nothing whatever; and is certainly no argument for the existence of God.

My other correspondent, however, thinks that I ought more fully to deal with the five Theistic arguments used by Thomas Aquinas. They are almost always paraded by Roman Catholics as unanswerable and as such, they knock the bottom out of Atheism.

They are put forward by Mr. Arnold Lunn in his book, *Now I See*; though it is particularly amusing to find this gentleman, whose general utterances on vital questions breathe as much of foolishness as fatuity, calmly admitting that he was "unable to understand," and therefore would "make no attempt to expound the fourth argument" of Aquinas. One would have thought that he could easily have put his difficulties before one of those priests of Rome—like Father D'Arcy—whose business it is to help the groping convert. As the fourth argument is not given, therefore, I cannot deal with it; but I don't expect it will make any difference either way. Even if I managed to controvert all the arguments of Aquinas, which he put forward as proving the existence of God, I am quite sure few Catholics would read me and still fewer be converted. They would only fall back on something else, and claim that *that* has never been controverted, and so the merry game would go on.

Aquinas's arguments are merely the old design argument hashed up in a so-called philosophical way. "His first proof is from the existence of motion. Everything that moves is set in motion by another. The agent of change is not self-determined, but determined in its turn by a preceding agent. This process cannot, however, go on *ad infinitum*. . . . It must begin with an agent who is self-determined, with a first mover who is himself unmoved. By this all men understand God." Here we get the old, familiar, "proof" that as the Universe could not have come of or by itself, it must have been made by God. And if the argument is carried further, to the extent of asserting that God could not, any more than the Universe, have made himself, and therefore must have been made, the believer generally holds up his hand in horror and says: "Why, this is rank (or blank or blatant) Atheism!" Motion exists, though, of course, purely relatively. But to assert or imply that there ever was a *beginning* of Motion, that all things were once *still*, till a Mover came along with his push, is pure supposition. We know nothing whatever about it. Let Aquinas or his Catholic supporters *prove* the Universe was absolutely—not relatively—still in time. I, for my part, assert that such proof is just as impossible as proving that the Universe had a beginning.

or was created or made. These statements are just words and convey no real meaning. It is impossible to imagine the "beginnings" of the "Absolute" or "Nature" or "Matter" or whatever name one calls "existence."

But if one insists that motion came from someone called God, as it could not have come by or of itself, then something or other must have made God move "everything that moves." And we are thus bound to go on *ad infinitum*, no matter what Aquinas or Mr. Arnold Lunn after him might say. To say that the "agent" of movement must be "self-determined" or the "first mover himself" unmoved is pure fudge. It merely assumes the very thing which has to be proved in the argument. In short, we are simply back to the old Atheistic argument, "Who made God?" without any answer to the obvious conundrum.

And it is no good, as Father D'Arcy claims, to say that "Aquinas is not arguing from the impossibility of an infinite series. He means that the addition of dependent things *ad infinitum* will do nothing to get rid of the dependence." Well, the difficulty of the "dependence" is not of our making. We simply say that the whole argument is as it stands meaningless, unless we are clearly shown how Aquinas came to consider that the Universe was once still. "Every event," says Aquinas, "is determined by a cause, but an infinite series of causes will give no explanation of how causation began." It is the same argument, and so is the third, "that nothing we know exists in its own right." D'Arcy, attempting to expound and back up Aquinas, admits that "they are all aspects of one and the same argument." The answer is simply that making "God" the "cause" explains the Universe no more than "an infinite series of causes." How does a believing Catholic explain the creating or the making or the origin of the Universe more than an Atheist? To say "God" did it is no explanation whatever. The fifth argument is from the "order" and "system" in nature; and again this is merely a variation of the design argument. Once a reader has grasped the criticisms against the design argument contained in such works as Holyoake's *Trial of Theism*, Bradlaugh's *A Plea for Atheism*, or Chapman Cohen's *Theism or Atheism, Grammar of Freethought*, and *Materialism Re-stated*, any difficulty of answering Aquinas would vanish. Here I can only deal with a big question in simple terms and very briefly. But one must master certain fundamentals of the position, and they are not quite as easy as the proverbial A.B.C. They are worth mastering all the same. The philosophical arguments used by the really great Theists cannot altogether be disposed of by talking about Bible absurdities.

I hope the foregoing will prove helpful, and encourage more and more the study of the Atheistic position.

H. CUTNER.

The whole tone of Church teaching in regard to woman is, to the last degree, contemptuous and degrading.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

I do not believe that any type of religion should ever be allowed to be introduced into the public schools of the United States.—Thomas A. Edison.

The power of religious dogma, when inculcated early, is such as to stifle conscience, compassion, and finally every feeling of humanity.—Schopenhauer.

A Plea for a Common Front

(Concluded from page 460)

We are now at this point of the argument able to demonstrate the utter differences between the Soviet Socialist state (developing into the Communist classless society) and the Fascist totalitarian state. Obscurantists have sought to confuse the issues, and pretend that both represent tyrannies.

But consider. The Fascist state assumes an imposition of unity on a class-rent state at the last stages of its vitality. The Soviet state proceeds towards the creation of real unity by socializing production. What the Fascist seeks to obtain by brutal force, and lying demagoguery, and vile creations of scapegoats, Jew-baiting, war-lust—the Soviet actually creates by removing the sources of division (namely, the parasitic ownership of the sources of wealth).

The Fascist enslaves women and enthrones the prostitute as the necessary safety-valve of marriage. The Soviet gives woman complete social and economic equality with man, and takes great and humane trouble to liquidate the whole business of prostitution, its inheritance from the bourgeois.

The Fascist prepares for war as the only escape from the internal crisis. The Soviet has no internal crisis, because it has no unemployed and has in its own citizens a market that cannot glut.

The Fascist needs all kinds of scapegoats and theories of racial difference. The Soviet admits no racial differences. Instead of baiting Jews it gives them full civic status; and if they wish to live together, they have Biro Bidjan which has thrived exceedingly (despite the calumniating prophecies of bourgeois Zionists) and will shortly become an autonomous Republic. What the British Imperialist especially hates in the Soviet Union is the proof there given that there is no reason why backward peoples should remain backward. In a decade the Soviet has done infinitely more for its backward peoples than the British have done for their coloured races in a century, and has proved that the most backward people can speedily become autonomous. The British pose of the Roman administrator is demonstrated a ghastly lie.

And there is this basic difference. The Fascist state (like the Parliamentary state, of which it is the reactionary expression) deals in power imposed from above. The Soviet state is the first real democratic state, for the flow of power is *from beneath*. Let anyone who doubts this claim read the two volumes *Soviet Communism*, by the Webbs, the last people who could be accused of Marxist preconceptions. They arrive at the conclusion that Soviet democracy is true democracy, and that Soviet progress is of a kind never seen on the earth before.¹³

¹³ Thus the Webbs: "The term dictatorship is surely a misnomer for this untrifling corporate inspiration, evocation and formulation of a General Will among so huge a population . . ." etc. There is no longer any excuse for not realizing that Soviet society is the first real democratic society born on earth. Since I wrote these articles, the Soviet draft Constitution has been published. Those who read into it a "revival" of Western parliamentarianism, miss the whole point. This Constitution takes the U.S.S.R. *further still* away from the class-rent capitalist form of bourgeois dictatorship through Parliament. It is merely an expression of the essential and unpervertable democratic basis laid down from the first—a basis that will grow more happily concrete every year, while the rest of the world loses the few elements of liberty gained under the period of the free-trade (creative) capitalism. See article, Ivor Montague *The Land of the Free*, Left Book Club Views 3.)

How could it be otherwise? The Soviet organization is not a bureaucracy imposed from above, as so many hasty critics assume. It is the spontaneous committee-form developed by the workers themselves; and its ancestor is the Paris Communes of 1870. Marx, with his penetrating vision, saw the significance of the spontaneous social forms created by the Commune. He hailed in them the basis of the future free society; and here we have another example of his marvellous insight.

It was a perception of these facts that has made writers of the stature of André Gide, Bloch, Romain Rolland, Barbusse turn to the Soviet Union as the sole hope of the individual.¹⁴ Younger French writers such as Malraux and Giono are now also Communist. "Communism restores fertility to the individual" (Malraux). Or as one of our own finer liberals, S. M. Forster, has said: "no political creed except Communism offers an intelligent man any hope." A sensitive leader of American thought such as Waldo Frank has developed from Spinoza to Marx and come to Communism, as also has Theodore Dreiser, and there has been a magnificent birth of Marxist literature among the young writers, Conroy, Farrell, Dos Passos, etc. The submerged peoples of China, Japan, India, South and Central America, are also developing a Marxist literature as their pledge of freedom; and even in England the last year or so has seen a definite change. Now we have such "left" writers as Alec Brown, James Hanley, Lennox Kerr, Ralph Bates, Montagu Slater, Harold Heslop, J. Sommerfield, Lionel Britton, etc., not to mention the strong group of Marxist poets. The list will now rapidly increase, and the growth of a vital Marxist literature is assured.

But the core of Marxist expression is the literature of the U.S.S.R., which is already one of the great literatures of the world—not because it has yet produced a single book of the calibre of Homer or Shakespeare or Rabelais; but because there is a powerful inspiration in it, which richly reveals a basically new creative freedom. *Freedom*, that is the keynote of Soviet life; and it is magnificently reflected in its literature. Here is a witness that cannot lie. For creativeness is the one thing that cannot be faked. Sholokhov, Jasienski, Panferov, Gladkov, Leonov, Avdeyenko, Vinogradov, Voronsky, Shaginyan, Soboliov, Demidov, Ehrenburg, Serafimovitch—the list can be extended enormously. Everywhere there is the same joyous perception of reality, the same critical freedom, the same profound awareness of the dialectical problems of the "new man."

Despotic conditions must be barren of great art. Italy has been Fascist for the same period as that in which the already-great literature of the U.S.S.R. has blossomed. Can Italy produce even one mediocre Fascist work of art to put beside the tremendous outburst of cultural activity in the U.S.S.R.? It cannot. The literary weeds of Fascism are as stunted and ugly and trivial as one would suppose. The advent of Fascism in Germany had obliterated the fine German literature of the 'twenties. The best authors are exiles in opposition, and either have turned to Marxism or are friendly towards it. The few who have tried to fit themselves to Nazi ideology,

¹⁴ Thus Gide: "I am a fervent individualist . . . Individuals and their peculiarities can best flourish in a Communist society. . . . Among all the qualities I admire in Soviet Russia, I admire more than all else the respect shown for the peculiarities of each people, of each little State in the great Union; respect for its language, the manners and customs, its culture, its peculiar characteristics. . . ." *The Individual* (Left Review, Z.H.) Compare this Soviet attitude with Fascist racialism.

such as Hans Fallada, have made a woeful exhibition of themselves.

What then is your choice to be? The decaying forms of Capitalism, Fascism, which have to sabotage the development of science; or Communism, which asks the fullest collaboration of science, which depends for its very existence on the free development of science?

It is no use saying "A plague on both your houses." That is merely to castrate yourself from reality and to aid reaction.

I appeal then for all members of the N.S.S. and R.P.A. to realize what is at stake. The advance into full Marxism cannot be made without a careful examination of the Marxist position, an absorption of the books in which the Marxist position finds its classical expression. I have indicated in this essay the books which the student requires to read before he can form an opinion on the subject.

I am not trying to make hasty converts to Marxism. But I have tried to outline the issues before us to-day with sufficient cogency to enable the inquirer to make a choice as to which tendency he prefers. He need not be a Marxist to see that the U.S.S.R. genuinely wants world-peace, and is carrying out a significant and worthy social experiment. He need not be a Marxist to see that Fascism represents the triumph of all that is evil and reactionary.

There is, therefore, a common platform on which all men of good-will can meet. That platform is the resistance to Fascist tendencies. Where the N.S.S. can help is by the exposition of a sound materialism. That it has done and is doing; but I ask Mr. Cohen and his active helpers to take a careful look at dialectics and see where they can fruitfully add its method to their armoury. The result would be a great increase in the N.S.S. appeal, a great extension of the area of interest it can command.

A start has been made in the right direction by such bodies as the League for the Defence of Civil Liberties and the Friends of the Soviet. Scientists such as Julian Huxley are active in the first, and publicists such as Keynes in the second. But something more is needed to draw together the mass of well-intentioned middle-class opinion. Otherwise, it will dissipate itself in mere protests and be helpless when the emergency comes. Above all what is needed in scientific circles is a lead in materialist thinking. We have scientists such as Bernal, Haldane, Levy, who are either Marxists or near-Marxists. Cannot they be somehow made into a more effective body?¹⁵

The greatest need of the moment in the political world is the creation of a Popular Front between Communists, I.L.P., and Labour Party, with mass-action organized in support through the trade unions. If this unity of the working-class forces is brought about in Britain, the world-war will be averted, and a tremendous step will have been taken towards settling our troubles on the line of least violence.

I appeal to the N.S.S. leaders to review the free-thinking position in the light of world-conditions, and to fight for the fusion of the social and rationalist problems with increased energy—to seek to draw the intelligent scientists into this fight, and thereby widen the possibilities of educating our "intel-

¹⁵ And who is to defend us from the R.P.A. champion, Sir Arthur Keith, who is a leader of social obscurantism? For his vilely Fascist rectorial address at Aberdeen, see E. Richword's C.P. Peace pamphlet *War and Culture*. Typical of Keith was his belittling review in the *Sunday Times* of *We Europeans*, by Julian Huxley and Haddon, a book of real scientific value as an exploder of racial fanaticism.

lectuals on materialist lines. "Impartiality" and "non-political bias" can be a very thin cloak for reaction, since every question has its political relation.

For, whoever is vague as to the issues, at least the Pope isn't. Learn a lesson from him in that respect, even if you apply the conclusions differently. With his clergy singing *Te Deum*s throughout Italy, in glorification of the victory gained by Fascism over Abyssinia with bombs and poison-gas, he made a special denunciation of Communism as the Enemy of peace and order. Which kind of "peace and order" do you prefer?

JACK LINDSAY.

The Book Shop

The late Augustine Birrell, to whom one could sincerely apply the word charming in describing his character, contributed an Essay in the *Everyman* series, entitled, "Book-buying." The reader will find it in *A Century of English Essays, from Caxton to R. L. Stevenson and Later Writers*. After writing with his usual wit that had depth, he concludes, on the breaking up of libraries, and the dispersal of books, "They will form new combinations, lighten other men's toil, and soothe another's sorrow. Fool that I was to call anything *mine*!" Turning over some books in a shop, your truant, C-de-B., found one which had belonged to him. It was in the *English Men of Letters*, edited by John Morley, on Hawthorne, by Henry James, Junr. Liberal notes, markings, queries, pungent comments, are scattered through the pages, and on the end leaf he had written out the following verse describing Hawthorne:—

"Do you ask me 'Tell me further
Of this Consul—of this Hawthorne?'
I would say—he is a sinner,—
Never goes inside a chapel,
Only sees outsides of chapels,
Says his prayers without a chapel!
I would say that he is lazy,
Very lazy—good for nothing;
Hardly ever goes to dinners,
Never goes to balls or soirées,
Thinks one friend worth twenty friendly;
Cares for love, but not for liking,
Hardly knows a dozen people,—
Knows old Baucis, and Philemon,
Knows a Beak and knows a Parson,
Knows a sucking, scribbling merchant,
Hardly knows a soul worth knowing,
Laxy, good-for-nothing fellow."

In youthful disgust, our copy of *The Scarlet Letter* was put in the fire; it might be useful now as an example—if one were needed, of the corrosive effect in human life of that giant bugaboo "Sin." With its creeping and entwining round a sensitive nature, with its admission to a vocabulary tainted at its source, it should create for Freethinkers a working rule—a demand from word-mongers to define their terms. How far Hawthorne's life was obsessed with mere phantasms—sin being one of them, may be found in the book of Henry James in a quotation from a commentator. "The reality of sin, the pervasiveness of evil, had been but slightly insisted upon in the earlier tales; in this series (Mosses from an old Manse) the idea bursts up like a long-buried fire, with earth-shaking strength, and the pits of hell seem yawning beneath us." If bouquets are in season, here is one for a creed that created horrors, forced man to his knees, and would gladly keep him there.

Old readers and theatre-goers will remember the late Mrs. Brown Potter, who died in February of this year, at the age of 77. We saw her in "Madame Dubarry," at the Savoy Theatre. Up to the end, what, in our opinion, was admirable was her love for intellectual pur-

suits. Four thin volumes of hers, Poems and Stories, lie before us; one short story entitled, *The Love of the Incas*, contains the following: "So passed away the high civilization of the Incas under the Spanish rule, the which has left a stain on the history of Spain which can never be effaced in the New World, and which echoes down through the corridors of time." She recited to Browning, and if time and leisure permitted it would be interesting to know if her public recitations were taken by Hardy and used in his novel, *The Hand of Ethelberta*. Mrs. Brown Potter was well-versed in Pythagoras and the theory of numbers. Her *Pythagorean Day Book* is dedicated to "One of the Heroes of Knowledge and Wisdom," and it contains some characteristic Greek rules and guides for conduct. Her world of make-believe—her profession—had been conquered, and it was rounded off in work of high endeavour, even if in some places, one disagreed with it; she was prodigal and gave the world more than she had received from it, and praise must be given to this rare type.

For a brief respite from books (without which life is not even beer and skittles), we have been putting real sweat into the soil, and this makes us a bit late in adding our word of thanks to the Editor for his booklet, *Humanity and War*. It has had a good sale, it is forthright, and the last paragraph which we quote might be read at prayers in the House of Commons, or at the opening of every meeting of the League of Nations:—

The moral equivalent for war is at hand, if we will use it. Human nature is plastic enough, and submissive enough to higher influences if we go to work in the right way. We shall not by the means indicated destroy the fighting capacity of man. We shall only purify it by raising it to a higher level. Man will remain a fighting animal. But he will be engaged in a warfare that causes harvests to bloom where desolation once reigned, a warfare that aims at the destruction of the organic and inorganic enemies of humanity.

Here is Mr. Chapman Cohen at his positive best; his negative worst is but the destruction of decayed and rotten ideas that encumber men's mental ground, with one happy proviso—he always gives a clear lead as to what is to take the place of the space cleared for sunlight, gentle rain, and growth of better mental equipment.

We threatened to be up to date, although decided that newspapers were not worth eye-strain, and never intended for intelligent people. Newspapers' bills of fare would not excite an appetite in a tame rabbit; here are a few, indicating what their purveyors think of man, the paragon of creation (see Shakespeare):—

1. Five Howling Dogs tell of Murder.
2. Richest Baby Movie Pictures.
3. Al Capone Stabbed.
4. Snakes in Court at Murder Trial.
5. Jail Break after Execution.
6. Man who blew himself up with a Cup of Cold Water.

The last one is ours, and is just as thrilling as the others; we made it up. If newspapers give the people stones for bread, we shall require better evidence from them that the public is given what it wants, and a procession of subtle conundrums in their columns to readers too stupid to demand anything better is a good lesson to the student in the art of mesmerism by words. It is refreshing to note, however, that more people are reading books. We learn that thirty thousand copies have been sold of Mr. Charles Morgan's novel *Sparkenbroke*, and relatively the news would be just as good if the book in question was *Alice in Wonderland*. Nietzsche was on sure ground when he wrote, "We despise newspaper culture."

C-DE-B.

Heaven is never pictured as a land of the shovel and the hoe.—G. A. Dorsey.

No man nor any body of men is good enough or wise enough to dispense with the tonic of criticism.—Huxley.

Correspondence

THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—Mr. Llewelyn Powys very kindly describes my point of view as "eminently practical." I hope he will not think me unkind if I describe his as pre-eminently imaginative.

I maintain that the teaching attributed to Jesus by the Gospel writers, e.g., turning the other cheek when smitten; forgiving unto seventy times seven when injured; would produce if practised a type of humanity that would invite oppression and injustice.

Praying and fasting invoke a magical assistance which is fatal to self reliance and independence.

I cannot agree that anything in the teachings of Jesus suggested the paramount importance of the individuals' life experience. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul," has for centuries discouraged endeavour and stunted growth. "Take no thought for the morrow," has encouraged inaction, and stifled any impulse to achievement. The importance attached to saving the alleged "soul" has created a self-centred introspective habit of life, which has ignored the glorious possibilities of a healthy mind in a healthy body. Humanity has progressed in spite of the teachings of Jesus—not because of them.

I hope Mr. Llewelyn Powys will agree.

E. C. SAPHIN.

A CRITICISM

SIR,—My attention has just been called to the versification under the heading, "A National Bereavement," in your issue for July 12, as being quite unworthy of a place in your columns, and to that extent likely to be harmful to the movement for which the *Freethinker* stands. As I feel that there may be many readers besides myself who concur in this opinion, both as regards "Quondam's" choice and treatment of his subject (culled from the *Sunday Dispatch*), I hope you will permit the expression of it, from

A REGULAR READER.

["Quondam" has every appreciation of affection for a pet, and respect for a dead man. The satire was aimed at a specimen of relie worship which reflects little credit on our civilization.—ED.]

MASARYK AND PERSECUTION

SIR,—My authority for my remarks on Masaryk was not a Communist source, but Emil Ludwig's book *Defender of Democracy*. There Masaryk is reported as defending his action in the following Jesuitical terms: "The speeches I made in those days are not an index of what will now be done. Such Communists are still too monarchically-minded, and make the President responsible for what the censorship does. . . . Naturally, the Government cannot accede to the Communists in everything, when their behaviour is inimical to the State."

Either, then, my charge is correct, or Ludwig is a liar—which is very unlikely.

Since I am writing, I should like to point out how the recent events in Spain underline my contention that a ruling-class, electorally defeated, will always have recourse to arms—that is, when the electoral defeat leads to a *real transfer of power* however small.

JACK LINDSAV

The true pearl which Cleopatra dissolved in her wine was the manhood of Antony.—James Thomson (B.V.)

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.

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BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, opposite the Bandstand): 6.30, Mrs. E. Grant.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Mr. L. Ebury. Highbury Corner, 8.0, Wednesday, August 5, Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 6.30, Mr. L. Ebury. Rushcroft Road, opposite Brixton Town Hall, 8.0, Tuesday, August 4, Mr. E. C. Smith. Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town, 8.0, Friday, August 7, Mr. L. Ebury.

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

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CHESTER-LE-STREET (The Bridge): 8.0, Friday, July 31, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Queen's Drive, opposite Walton Baths): 8.0, A Lecture. St. James Mount, Liverpool, 8.0, Wednesday, A Lecture.

MIDDLESBROUGH: 7.0, Tuesday, August 4, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

MIDDLESBROUGH (Davidson Street): 7.0, Friday, July 31, Mr. H. Dalkin. A Lecture.

PRESTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place, Preston): 7.30, Mr. McClellan (Bury)—"Christianity and War."

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