

# THE FREETHINKER

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## Views and Opinions

**The Common Front**

WHEN Mr. Jack Lindsay suggested the writing of a series of articles on the need for a "Common Front," I cheerfully agreed, for several reasons. First, and particularly, because Mr. Lindsay is a writer of distinction, with a sincerity that is beyond question, and with a total disregard for the respectabilities and personal profit. He is one with whom we may always either agree with pleasure or disagree with profit. Second, because one hears so much of the common front as though that were quite a new discovery in social policies, that Mr. Lindsay's articles might well compel a re-examination of one's position, and that is always a desirable, and ought to be a profitable occupation. In a world where the rate of change increases with each generation, a periodical mental stocktaking is essential to those who wish to make theories fit the facts. To use a Marxian generalization for a very, very old process, as everything carries within itself the seeds of its own destruction, and as institutions tend to become out of date with a rapidity measured by their beneficial influence on life, the negation of the negation must always occur. I have been teaching this for more than forty years, and with the full consciousness that it has no more to do with economic developments than with anything else. In one point Mr. Lindsay was in error. This was when he said that what he calls Dialectical Materialism (but which I should prefer to call more accurately, I think, economic determinism) has never been discussed in these columns. Several times I opened the paper to articles and letters in the hope that it would lead to a genuine discussion. My hopes were not realized. After all "Dialectical Materialism" claims to be a theory of sociology or a philosophy of history, and theories and philosophies should be discussed as such, and neither denounced as though their acceptance was a crime, or approved as though they were heaven-sent teachings. Either course savours

too much of the religious type to be acceptable to real Freethinkers. When theories are put forward with the ferocity of a medieval Catholic theologian, wedded to the intolerance of a seventeenth century Presbyterian, the controversy is likely neither to convert one side or to further inform the other. Hence the welcome given to Mr. Lindsay's suggestion.

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### Union versus Sectarianism

Let me say at once, that I quite agree with the policy of a common front. And both as editor of this paper and as President of the National Secular Society, I say that this is not only nearly always advisable, but is often of imperative necessity. I also agree that to decline to work with others on one point because we do not agree with them on all points is "to become sectarian" and sometimes "reactionary." But I am not certain that Mr. Lindsay does not, quite unconsciously lay himself open to the first of these charges. Otherwise he might have recognized that the last body of people to be charged with "sectarianism" are Freethinkers, and the last organization to be accused of not recognizing the virtues of a "common front" is the National Secular Society. For with us the "Common Front" is here, and it has been put into operation whenever it has been possible. It has been the set policy of the N.S.S. whenever it has been possible, to create a common front. One of the earliest Common Fronts with which I found myself associated was the agitation on behalf of the Spanish prisoners, away back in the early 'nineties. I found myself sitting cheek by jowl with people of all sorts of political, religious and ethical opinions, and by keeping to the job in hand we got on very well together. Since then I have served on many common front committees, again representing the N.S.S. In such matters as attempting to secure Secular Education, the defence of freedom of speech and publication, etc., we have created common fronts by uniting with men and women of different shades of political and religious opinion, and with even clergymen who have taken their religion very seriously indeed. I do not think that there is need for Mr. Lindsay, the Communist Party, or any other Party, to lecture us on the need for a common front. So far as we are concerned the common front is here, and it is in operation whenever and wherever we can get people to co-operate with us. And even though we cannot always get others to work with us, it is in operation in the N.S.S. all the time. For when a man joins our ranks there is no inquisition as to his political opinions, his ethical theories, his sociological views, or on any other subject save that of requiring his adherence to the principles of the National Secular Society. We do not care whether he is Socialist, Liberal, or Conservative, whether he swears with, or at Karl Marx. We accept him as a member, and we expect him to act

honourably to his pledge of membership. If he cannot do this, then his place is outside our ranks—but we should still demand his right to be heard, even though he would form no part of our body.

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#### The Loyalty of Association

I trust this will make it plain that we are in no wise opposed to a "Common Front." I do not claim that we invented it. It is really one of the secondary laws of social aggregates, and it is manifest in every society known to me, ancient and modern. It is fundamentally no more than the association of men and women sharing common opinions, common tastes, common habits, or common aims. Associations of artists, writers, musicians, business men and workmen are formed because each group hold certain things in common, and work to promote opinions they share in common, and while working for this "common front," they set on one side their partisan or sectarian aims. It is expressed with a working-class, an employing-class, or an aristocracy, or even when the binding principle is the abolition of all classes. It has no necessary connexion with Marxism, save that it creates one of those "slogans" that suits those with whom catch-phrases serve as a substitute for serious thinking. Human society is, in short composed of a series of "common fronts," beginning with the basic one of the fight against the raw forces of nature which threaten man's existence, on to the common front formed by a group of Little Bethelites.

But the common front must exist in fact as well as in name. It must not be used for one of the component parts to advance sectarian aims or to attack another component part. It need not, of course, conflict with sectarian aims, but it must not be used for their promotion. In the common fronts with which I have been connected the Atheist did not use the association to attack Christianity, the Christian did not use it to attack Atheism. The differences between the two remained as great as ever, and outside the "Common Front" neither party relaxed its attack on the other. The Atheist was not asked to pay tribute to Christianity, the Christian was not expected to weaken in his desire to defeat Atheism. And when the purpose for which the Common Front was formed was accomplished the union was abandoned, with mutual respect on both sides. Perhaps it had also accomplished the no mean task of helping each side to realize that mutual respect might well co-exist with diametrically opposed opinions.

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#### Co-operation or Absorption

But as I read Mr. Lindsay's essay he is not writing on behalf of what is commonly understood by a "Common Front." His exposition of Dialectical Materialism aims at proving that Freethought and a properly ordered life is not possible except on the basis of the acceptance of a specific economic theory. I am not going to argue whether this is right or wrong, but will content myself with saying that it is not so obviously true that Freethinkers may be expected to drop their special propaganda and rush forward to the preaching of Marxian Communism. I think that, while admitting most of Mr. Lindsay's statements as being substantially true, an interpretation different from his own might be placed upon them. And they might be used to point to different conclusions. For the moment I am content to point out that what he is asking is not the suppression of points of difference in order to present a common front to the enemies of Freethought, but for Freethinkers to adopt a particular economic theory in order to further what he understands by Freethought.

The Freethought Party in general, and the National Secular Society in particular, is asked to take part in an economic crusade, or if the term is preferred, a sociological crusade, with which all Freethinkers do not agree, in order to form a "Common Front" with another party, the aim of the combination being the creation of a new economic order. But the essence of a common front is that differences shall be dropped for the time being in order to unite on something with which all parties are in agreement. In the circumstances it looks to me to be, not the case of different parties forming a common front—each party maintaining its distinctiveness, but the absorption of the Freethought movement by the self-styled "Dialectical Materialists." I do not question the advantage to the absorbing party, but what of the party that is absorbed? It cannot be said to be part of a common front, because its distinctive character has gone for ever. It looks like the kind of common front that is formed by a tiger after it has taken its lunch with a lamb. The lamb may, of course, be said to form part of the tiger's common front, but the possibility of separation and distinctive action no longer exists. It is the kind of common front that exists in Italy, in Germany, and to a lesser extent in Russia, although in fairness to Russia, it should be recognized that while in Russia suppression is announced as a more or less temporary measure, in Italy and Germany it is to endure forever unless outraged human nature puts an end to it.

But I must insist that there is no meaning whatever in a "Common Front," it becomes a mere dishonesty of phrasing—from which, I hasten to say, I completely absolve Mr. Lindsay—if the distinctive policies of the combining parties are not maintained apart from the common front that has been created for a specific purpose, or if in the formation of the common front any one party in the combine preaches in the name of the combination its own sectarian doctrine. Pressure may drive the tiger and the lamb to suspend hostilities while they get a drink from the same pool, but the common front thus used must not be taken advantage of by the tiger to secure a tooth-some lunch.

Of course it is quite open for Mr. Lindsay to argue that the Freethought Party can never properly work unless it adopts the teachings of Marxian Communism. I am not going to argue against it now, because it is not material to the question of a "Common Front." He may also say, he does say, that while the Freethought movement has done a great work in the past, the situation to-day has so altered that further progress along the old lines is no longer possible. In that case I profoundly disagree with him. Freethought has always been a liberative movement and a creative movement; it has been a creative movement because it has been a liberative one. It fixed the attention of men and women upon the necessity of creating a society which should take conscious control of its own destinies, secure freedom of thought as a means to that end, and so enable human life to be lived with dignity and self-respect. It attacked religious beliefs, not merely because they formed an opium for the people, leading them to find consolation in a future life for miseries they need not have in this, but because religious beliefs were everywhere the bulwark of vested (not necessarily economic) interests, and because they interfered with the free play of critical opinion, without which the progressive development of society is impossible.

The Freethinking attack of the late seventeenth century, and of the eighteenth century broke down the religious front. It paved the way for the social agitation of Paine, Owen, and their successors, and

thus illustrated the truth of Marx's statement that the "criticism of religion is the prerequisite of all criticism." The extent to which the Freethought attack forced upon all the recognition of the existence of a social problem led to one form of agitation after another, as a consequence of which the social question assumed larger and larger proportions. I fancy Mr. Lindsay will agree with this, although he may retort that the situation has changed. But as he also believes that the situation is always changing, an opinion that is part and parcel of all genuine Freethought, the issue may be put in two forms. First, has the religious type of mind become so weak and ineffective that it need no longer be guarded against, and, second, assuming that it has worn itself out, has the time come when Freethought, as such, can no longer do useful, that is, critical, and propagandist work? I believe that no society, whether it is Marxian or anything else, can ever profitably afford to lose sight of the value of Freethought propaganda.

I say this because I agree with Mr. Lindsay that life is a process. I have been teaching that for over forty years, and I agree that every stage of that process contains within itself the seeds of its own destruction. I have been teaching that all my life. But I have also been teaching that religion does not cease with the abandonment of specific religious doctrines. It is never so dangerous as when it drops religious forms of speech and enters politics, sociology, philosophy and ethics with its original mental forms substantially unchanged. That is what I have had in mind when I have said that so many people are still wandering about with the ghost of a god as one of their most prized possessions, although quite unaware of what they are carrying.

On one other point I am in agreement with Mr. Lindsay. The fight against reaction must go on, and the danger of reaction is greater to-day than it has been for several generations. I agree, too, that it is "sectarian," "egoistical," and "obstinate" to refuse to join in a common effort to preserve freedom because one does not agree with all the opinions of some who proffer their aid. It is because the N.S.S. has always held to that policy that it has practiced, whenever possible, the policy of the "Common Front." We are always willing to work with those who can loyally combine for a common purpose. But to say that this cannot be done unless we adopt a particular theory of economics, or a special theory of sociology, which is held by the party that cries out for common action, is to play for absorption under the guise of co-operation. It is "sectarian" and "reactionary"; it is the point at which insistence becomes "mere egotism, anarchic, obstinate" however sincere may be one's intentions.

There are other aspects of Mr. Lindsay's articles that must be dealt with, but I have already taken up a very great space, and will deal with these in later articles.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Praise is well, blame is well; but affection is the final and most precious reward that any man can win.

Mark Twain.

My position has always been that the word "God" is either undefined, or that the attempted definitions are contradictory, or incoherent. I am essentially a Monist: to me existence is sufficient for all phenomena, and I find it difficult to appreciate the position of those who invent a second existence or plural existences, in lieu of explanation, in order to account for imperfectly comprehended phenomena.—Charles Bradlaugh.

## The Popularity of Paine

"Rough work, iconoclasm, but the only way to get at truth."—O. W. Holmes.

"Liberty, a word without which all other words are vain."—Ingersoll.

THE announcement that the bi-centenary of the birth of Thomas Paine will be celebrated in the United States next year makes pleasant reading for Freethinkers, for it is but a simple act of justice towards a really great man, who devoted his life to the service of his fellows. No name has inspired such terror in the breasts of the Orthodox in English-speaking countries as that of Thomas Paine. Indeed, the clergy of all denominations regarded him as the protagonist of Freethought, and that reputation cost him very dearly. For none has been more hated, none more reviled by pious folks. The reason is quite a simple one. He attacked bigotry and superstition, not in the dull and dry-as-dust fashion of professors writing for the benefit of other learned men, but with lucidity and liveliness which have survived the winnowing of many generations. He made the clergy appear ridiculous as well as odious, and those who felt the sting of his lash denounced him as Anti-Christ, whose writings all should avoid as they would a plague. All whose financial interests were bound up with the Christian Religion stigmatized Paine as a shallow scoffer and a very unscrupulous controversialist, railing at all things holy and of good repute.

In his own time this jaundiced view was strenuously fostered by the clergy. Not only was he the target of innumerable insults, but men and women were fined and imprisoned for selling his books. The clergy lied, and lied to such purpose that whole generations of innocent Christian people firmly believed that Thomas Paine was one of the most wicked men who ever lived, a monster capable of anything, even wholesale murder.

His principal offence was the publication of *The Age of Reason*, which was the first important book in English attacking the Christian Religion. His offence was aggravated by the fact that it was written in as plain language as Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, or *Robinson Crusoe*, and could be read by the masses as well as the classes. Furthermore, Paine pressed his arguments to their legitimate conclusions, and the clergy became really alarmed for the safety of their own positions.

Notwithstanding, or perhaps we ought to say inevitably conducted by this Niagara of clerical passion and disdain, the clergy actually called attention to the thing they wished with all their hearts to be ignored. Not for the first time, the greedy and possessive priests were too clever by half. Boldly as Paine might write, his books very largely owed their success to the extraordinary courage of the Freethinkers themselves. Richard Carlile, for example, endured over nine years' imprisonment in this terrible and prolonged battle. The clergy and their cat's paws were thoroughly aroused by so determined a resistance, and prosecuted without mercy. They attacked women as well as men, and Carlile's brave wife and courageous sister were dragged to gaol for two years each. As each Freethinker was imprisoned fresh ones stepped into the breach, and one after the other went to prison. It was as heroic as a page torn from old Plutarch. One small party of Freethinkers serving between them over fifty years in prison, thousands of pounds' worth of literature destroyed, and all in defence of the elementary rights of free speech in a country supposed to be in the van of civilization. Following one of these prosecutions the poet Shelley addressed the judge, Lord Ellenborough, a scathing

letter, in which he is held up before posterity like a fly in amber. "Do you think," wrote the young poet, "to please the god you worship by this exhibition of your zeal? If so, the demon to whom some nations offer human hecatombs is less barbarous than the deity of civilized society."

A very strange result followed: the continuous and concerted abuse of Paine by the clergy actually advertised his book. Writers boast of the glory of a fifth edition, but very few authors indeed achieve uninterrupted sales for over a century. Yet this truly amazing thing happened to Thomas Paine, who, whilst living, was treated like a mad dog, and whose books were attempted to be destroyed time after time by his Christian opponents. These works were so much in advance of his eighteenth-century generation that even to-day they are still text-books for reformers.

Paine's fame is quite secure, for he has written his name too deeply on history's page for it to be erased. Nor is this to be wondered at, for in a generation of brave men and women he was one of the boldest and noblest. A veritable Don Quixote, no wrongs found him indifferent. He used his swift, live pen not only for the democracies of France and America, which might reward him, but for slaves and animals who could not. Poverty never left him; yet he made fortunes, and gave them generously to the cause he so loved. *The Rights of Man* was a brave book for any man to write, for it invited a trial for high treason and the utmost rigours of the law; but *The Age of Reason* was the bravest book ever written, for it challenged the entire priestcraft of all Christendom to a duel to the death. Not only was its author threatened with damnation in this world and eternal fire in the next, but scores of men and women were actually imprisoned for selling it. Paine himself was libelled and lied about by the salaried-sons-of-God to such an extent, that his very name seemed threatened with an immortality of infamy.

Paine's two masterpieces, *The Rights of Man* and *The Age of Reason* are still an inspiration. "Where liberty is, there is my country," said that sturdy Republican, Benjamin Franklin, and Paine's unforgettable answer was, "Where liberty is not, there is mine." His was the hand that first wrote the arresting words, "The United States of America"; and the great Republic of the West owed as much to the swift, live pen of Paine as to the sharp swords of Lafayette and Washington. A democrat among democrats, Paine was always thinking of the poor and the oppressed. In his superb reply to Edmund Burke's highly-coloured, rhetorical tirade against the French Revolution, in which he reserved his tears and compassion too extensively for the sufferings of the aristocrats, Paine said: Mr. Burke pities the plumage, but forgets the dying bird. Even Burke himself, master of language that he was, might have envied the brilliance and felicity of the illustration. The poet Shelley—no mean judge—thought this so excellent that he used it as the motto for one of his own trenchant pamphlets.

Fine writing as it is, the embodied thought is finer still. It embodies the watchwords of Democracy, the marching music that drove Paine himself forth as a white-plumed knight in shining armour, that sent Lafayette to America and Byron to Greece, and has inspired generations of sweet-souled singers from Shelley to Swinburne to hymn, in immortal language, the praises of Liberty. To us Freethinkers Thomas Paine does not appeal solely as a most alert and brilliant writer. He has a permanent claim on our attention in his noble efforts towards the destruction of false ideals and illusions that beset mankind. Few men have so impressed themselves, not only upon

their own generation, but upon remote posterity. He was a pioneer of Freethought, which, many generations after his death, is now spreading its influence to the utmost confines of the civilized world, and is now revolutionizing humanity. His life shows an heroic purpose, and attests to a high design.

MIMNERMUS.

## The Humiliation of the Clergy

In early Tudor times a London society termed "The Association of Christian Brothers," preserved in comparative obscurity the evangel of the followers of Wycliffe. In the preceding Lancastrian era Lollardy had been practically suppressed by torture and the stake. Yet, despite this bitter religious persecution, a few devotees, mainly men of humble rank, still strove at the risk of their lives to spread their heresy. These zealots appear to have attracted many secret sympathizers even among those who did not share their opinions for the orthodox clergy were by no means popular. Papal exactions, coupled with the rapacity, pride and arrogance of the priesthood with its privileges and wealth, and the scandalous abuses of the ecclesiastical courts, conspired to make the clerical order a mark for practical men's satire and scorn.

The clergy had long enjoyed immunity from civil punishment for crimes committed by members of their order. Under Henry VI., this privilege was slightly restrained, while in the reign of Henry VII., every clerk found guilty of felony was henceforth to be burned in the hand, and in 1513, the privilege known as benefit of clergy was denied to clerical homicides and felons. Still, priests, deacons, and sub-deacons remained outside the jurisdiction of the civil law, and when Dr. Standish, in 1515, challenged the right of clerks in holy orders to be superior to the King's justice he was reviled in Convocation. Moreover, when a London citizen sued a clerk in a civil court for extortion, he was promptly charged with heresy in the bishop's court, and was soon found dead in his prison cell. Two of the bishop's subordinates were indicted for murder, and so much afraid was the Church of their conviction for the crime, that the bishops induced the Crown to postpone the trial asserting: "that London juries were so prejudiced against the Church that they would find Abel guilty of the murder of Cain; and that the clergy ought to have time to inquire of the Court of Rome whether submission to Civil Courts was consistent with the laws of God and the liberties of the Church." (Langmead, *English Constitutional History*, 6th ed., p. 329.)

Luther's arraignment of Rome had become the talk of Europe, and Henry VIII., now on the English throne, while willing, and perhaps eager to reform clerical abuses, regarded Luther's theses as wicked and heretical. Indeed, Henry's defence of the orthodox position gained for him and his successors the title of Defender of the Faith from Pope Leo X. But public sentiment was ripe for serious change and had the later quarrel between the King and the Curia never arisen to precipitate reform, drastic measures would have become inevitable under Edward VI. and Elizabeth.

The crowning achievement of Henry's reign was the political and statutory subordination of the Anglican Church. While the granting by the Papacy of the royal divorce remained undecided reform in ecclesiastical affairs proceeded slowly, but when Pope Clement under pain of excommunication for re-

fusal required the King to put away his second wife and restore Catherine as Queen the breach was irreparable, and the dethronement of the Church was soon accomplished. This revolution was the work of one—the Reformation Parliament—and, in the course of seven years' legislation, this assembly abolished the Pope's headship of the English Church, and made the secular ruler its supreme authority, while the Church's constitution and administrative powers were subjected to lay control. Acting, presumably, under royal instigation the faithful Commons petitioned the King to consider a detailed list of grievances against the clergy, and graciously to command a systematic scrutiny of clerical shortcomings.

In the first session of the Parliament of 1529 three laws were enacted restraining the privileges and temporalities of the clergy. The fees exacted by the ecclesiastical courts in matters of probate and administration were assessed at their sole discretion, and these were now reduced to less extortionate proportions. The shameful impositions of the clerical courts had long been a scandal and as early as the reign of Edward III., an Act had been passed to suppress the "outrageous and grievous fines and sums of money taken by the ministers of bishops . . . for the probate of testaments," but the clergy continued as avaricious as ever and now, for the first time in history, their overcharges were effectively restrained.

The mortuary fees of the parish clergy were also reduced and these had ever proved a heavy burden to the poor. This impost was now lightened, and a graduated scale of charges was made compulsory, while the fees were assessed according to the value of the deceased person's property. Moreover, married women, children, and the very poor were now entitled to complete exemption from these charges.

The clergy were no longer allowed to farm or trade. No priest was permitted to cultivate more land than that necessary for his household's support, or maintain tanneries or breweries, for the clergy had long been prominent in both these callings. Papal and episcopal dispensations in favour of clerical pluralities and non-residential benefices were declared unlawful, and those who contravened the statute became liable to heavy penalties. Yet, ironically enough, the right was reserved to the Crown to sell dispensations to royal chaplains or other favoured subjects who included legal luminaries, divines, and members of the aristocracy. The King now possessed "a powerful means—hitherto enjoyed by the Pope—of influencing the Lower House of Convocation."

In 1530-1 a further measure was made law which, on conviction, condemned beggars and vagabonds to whipping, ear-cropping, or the pillory, and among beggars and vagabonds the statute deliberately included every Proctor and Pardoner travelling about the country without proper authority. As the Proctors acted as agents for the ecclesiastical courts, and the Pardoners were the wandering vendors of Indulgences and relics fully authenticated by Rome, their inclusion was certainly significant.

Cardinal Wolsey was charged with the contravention of the Statute of *Premunire* inasmuch as he had obtained Papal Bulls, which he permitted to be read publicly, thus exercising Legatine authority in contempt of the Crown's legal rights. Although the Cardinal had secured the King's licence before using this authority he was found guilty, despoiled, dismissed and then pardoned. The charge so successfully urged against the fallen minister was now urged against the clergy as a whole, and an official information was filed in the Court of King's Bench indicting the entire clerical order. A large sum of money was offered to the Crown by the intimidated

clergy as payment for a full pardon, which was ultimately accepted, but only on condition that the King was acknowledged as "the protector and only supreme head of the Church of England."

It is noteworthy that the astute Henry, despotic as was his power, waived the regal prerogative of pardoning real or fictitious offences, and made Parliament a party to these curious proceedings. But the Commons very naturally suspected that the guilt imputed to the clergy, with their subsequent fleecing might with equal facility be extended from the spiritual to the temporal estates of the realm. So they hesitated in passing a measure against the clergy before they were permitted to pardon themselves. For the statute of *Premunire* was so comprehensive that it held within its clutches not only the clergy but the Privy Council, the Lords and Commons and, indeed, the general community. And it is not fable but sober fact that the King, after dallying with the laity's petition, granted them a pardon which was actually embodied in a Statute under which the imperious Henry condescended "of his mere notion, and of his benignity, special grace, pity, and liberality" to pardon by authority of Parliament all his temporal and lay subjects.

The first-fruits remitted to the Pope by archbishops and bishops before they received the Papal Bull confirming their election were now denounced as contrary to all equity and justice, and were made unlawful. Later, they became Crown property, until in 1704 they were appropriated to the poorer clergy and became known as *Queen Anne's Bounty*. The Act of 1531, which prohibited the payment of annates to Rome was strengthened in 1533, and all Papal control over the nomination of prelates was swept away. The system of election still observed was then established, and whenever a vacancy occurs in any cathedral church the Crown grants the dean and chapter a licence under the Great Seal "to elect the person named in the accompanying letters missive, and him they should choose and none other."

Peter's Pence and other exactions were no longer permitted to swell the Papal exchequer. The oath acknowledging the secular ruler's authority in all matters ecclesiastical was made obligatory to all candidates for, or holders of office under, the Crown. By the Act of Supremacy, 1534, the King was given complete liberty to "visit, reform, and correct all heresies, errors, abuses, offences, contempts and enormities" found within the Church.

Thus subordinated to State control, the clergy's influence declined. The path was now prepared for the dissolution of the religious houses, and this was unsparingly accomplished. Yet, Henry VIII. lived and died a pious Catholic, who remorselessly incinerated recusants from the Roman faith.

T. F. PALMER.

#### GREAT WORDS

Dreyfus is innocent. I swear it. At this solemn moment, in the presence of the tribunal which is the representative of human justice, before the whole of France, before the whole world, I swear that Dreyfus is innocent. But my forty years of work, by the authority that this toil may have given me, I swear that Dreyfus is innocent. By my works which have helped for the expansion of French literature, I swear that Dreyfus is innocent. May all that melt away, may my works perish, if Dreyfus be not innocent. He is innocent. All seems against me—the two Chambers, the civil authority, the most widely circulated journals, the public opinion that they have poisoned. I may be condemned here. The day will come when France will thank me for having helped to save her honour.—*Emile Zola*.

## Things Worth Knowing\*

### XLIX.

#### RELIGION AND WOMAN

At the earliest beginnings of civilization man's emotions seem to have swung to emphasis on the mystic and uncanny powers possessed by woman. Thus it was that in ancient nations there was a deification of woman which found expression in the belief in feminine deities and the establishment of priestess cults. Not until the dawn of the Christian era was the emphasis once more focussed on woman as a thing unclean. Then her mystic power was ascribed to demon communication, and stripped of her divinity, she became the witch to be excommunicated and put to death.

. . . The dedication of virgins to various deities, of which the classic example is the institution of the Vestal Virgins in Rome, and the fact that at Thebes and elsewhere even the male deities had their priestesses as well as priests, are other indications that at this time woman was regarded as capable of ministering to divinity. The prophetic powers of woman were universally recognized. The oracles at Delphi, Argos, Epirus, Thrace and Arcadia were feminine. Indeed, the Sibylline prophetesses were known throughout the Mediterranean basin.

. . . As goddess, priestess and prophetess, woman continued to play her rôle in human affairs until the Christian period, when a remarkable transformation took place. . . . To arrive at the concept of the Madonna, a far-reaching process of synthesis and re-interpretation must have been carried out before the Bible could be brought into harmony with the demands made by a cult of mother goddess. . . . One of the great difficulties was reconciliation of the biological process of procreation with divinity. But there had been for ages among primitive peoples the belief that impregnation was caused by spirit possession or by sorcery. This explanation had survived in a but slightly altered form in the ancient mythologies, all of which contained traditions of heroes and demi-gods who were born supernaturally of a divine father and a human mother. In the myths of Buddha, Zoroaster, Pythagoras and Plato, it was intimated that the father had been a god or spirit, and that the mother had been and moreover remained after the birth an earthly virgin. These old and precious notions of the supernatural origin of great men were not willingly renounced by those who accepted the new religion; nor was it necessary . . . because men thought they could recognize in the Jewish traditions something corresponding to the heathen legends.

The proper conditions for the development of a mother-cult within Christianity existed within the Church by the end of the second century. At the Council of Nicea, it was settled that the Son was of the same nature as the Father. . . . In 431 A.D., the Universal Church Council at Ephesus assented to the doctrine that Mary was the Mother of God. Thus Ephesus, home of the great Diana, from primitive times the centre of the worship of a goddess who united in herself the virtues of divinity and motherhood, could boast of being the birthplace of the madonna-cult. And thus Mary, our Lady of Sorrows, pure and undefiled, "the Church's paradox,"

\* 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.

became the ideal of man. She was "a woman, virgin and mother," sufficiently high to be worshipped, yet sufficiently near to be reached by affection.

. . . Although Christianity thus took over and embodied in its doctrines the cult of the mother-goddess, at the same time it condemned all the rites which had accompanied the worship of the fertility goddess in the pagan religion. The power of these rites was still believed in, but they were supposed to be the work of demons, and we find them strictly forbidden in the early ecclesiastical laws. The phallic ceremonials which formed so large a part of heathen ritual became marks of the devil, and the deities in whose honour they were performed, although losing none of their power, were regarded as demonic rather than divine in nature. Diana, goddess of the moon, for example, became identified with Hecate of evil repute, chief of the witches.

. . . In addition to the condemnation of Pagan deities and their ritualistic worship, there was a force inherent in the very nature of Christianity which worked towards the degradation of the sex life. After the death of Christ his followers had divorced their thoughts from all things earthly, and set about fitting themselves for their being placed in the other world. The thought of the early Christian sects was obsessed by the idea of the second coming of the Messiah. The end of the world was incipient, therefore it behoved each and every one to purge himself from sin. This emphasis on the spiritual as opposed to the fleshly became fixated especially on the sex-relationship, which came to be the symbol of the lusts of the body which must be conquered by the high desires of the soul. Consequently the feelings concerning this relation became surcharged with all the emotion which modern psychology has taught us always attaches to the conscious symbol of deeply underlying unconscious complexes.

. . . With the rejection of the idea of the sanctity of sex as embodied in the phallic rituals of the Pagan cults, the psychic power of woman became once more a thing of fear rather than of worship. . . . The power of woman to tell the course of future events which in other days had made her revered as priestess and prophetess, now made her hated as a witch who had control of what the Middle Ages knew as the black art. The knowledge of medicine which she had acquired through the ages was now thought to be utilized in the making of "witches' brew," and "the ceremonies and charms whereby the influence of the gods might be obtained to preserve or injure" became incantations to the evil one. . . . The asceticism of the Church made it shameful to yield to her allurements, and as a result woman came to be feared and loathed as the arch-temptress who would destroy man's attempt to conform to celibate ideals.

Among the Pagans, witches had shared with prophetesses and priestesses a degree of reverence and veneration. . . . The doctrines of Christianity had changed the veneration into hatred and detestation without eradicating the belief in the power of the witch.

. . . By the sixteenth century, the cumulative notion of witches had penetrated both cultivated and uncultivated classes, and was embodied in a great and increasing literature. . . . As a result of this belief in the diabolic power of woman, judicial murder of helpless woman became an institution, which is thus characterized by Sumner, "After the refined tortures of the body and nameless mental sufferings, women were executed in the most cruel manner. These facts are so monstrous that all other aberrations are small in comparison. . . . He who studies the witch trials believes himself transferred into the midst of a race

which has smothered all its own nobler instincts, reason, justice, benevolence and sympathy."

... Thus woman became degraded beyond all previous thought in the teaching of the early church. The child was looked upon as the result of an act of sin, and came into the world tainted through its mother with sin. At best marriage was a vice. All the Church could do was to cleanse it as much as possible by sacred rites, an attempt which harked back to the origin of marriage as the ceremonial breaking of taboo.

*Taboo and Genetics,*

by KNIGHT, PETERS AND BLANCHARD, Chapter 2.

## Acid Drops

For those interested in studying the origins of religion and how Christianity, for example, has grown up from a mass of myths and legends, one may note how the Roman Catholic Church is striving to make a "Holy Shrine" at Knock, Ireland, of equal importance to that at Lourdes. An old lady of 87 has been found who actually saw "Our Lady" visit the spot nearly 60 years ago. She is quite emphatic about it, too, and no doubt later will be made a saint. It is worth putting on record how these legends are formed, as they give a clue to the way in which the New Testament was composed. Here is her account:—

Some inhabitants at Knock saw the gable-end of the Church bathed in a wonderful light. Standing in the midst of this light were three figures. The villagers identified them as Our Lady with St. Joseph on her right and St. John on her left. Behind St. John was an altar, and on it was a lamb bearing a cross. Our Lady was wearing a white mantle, and on her head was a gold crown. Many stars appeared in the midst of the light.

It is inconceivable, of course, but this unmitigated drivel is actually put forward now as undeniable proof of the truth of the old lady's statement about Knock. Moreover, another proof of its truth is the fact that she "has never benefited in any way by helping the cause of Knock." "Our Lady" appeared with St. Joseph and John, and the only explanation that can be given as to why this town was chosen was because its priest was a man "of extraordinary sanctity."

Another witness of the apparition, however, has also been found in a Mrs. Kilbride, living at Batley. She "expressed no doubt about having witnessed the supposed apparition." Just as the number of appearances of Jesus to other people increased—was he not seen at last "of 500 brethren"?—so the old lady insisted that "Our Lady" appeared "a number of times." She remembers a boy running to Father Kavanagh to say that "Our Blessed Lady" was at the gable end of the Church. The priest went and, of course, he also saw Mary, who remained for half an hour and then disappeared.

Mrs. Kilbride, in proof of her assertion, had actually preserved a Holy Relic in the shape of "some plaster from the chapel gable"—which surely is evidence enough in itself. Moreover, immediately afterwards "a man who had to wear an iron shoe, jumped over a wall without the shoe!" Another man who had not seen for years "had his sight restored." With such crushing evidence for blasphemous doubters, we have to admit that Knock is just as holy as Lourdes. And we hope business will be as brisk in Ireland as it is in France.

We cannot refrain from adding another note to the above on the way in which the Roman Catholic authorities in Ireland are doing their best to make Knock a second Lourdes. As in the gospels, miracle follows

miracle, so witnesses of the "apparition" are now multiplying the "apparitions." Two more "witnesses" have been found, and—as in the gospels—their stories rather differ from the original versions, thus proving they are in sweet and truthful harmony. One of the women who saw "Our Lady" declares she was alone and "trying to open her eyes," and as some little children could not see her very well, "Our Lady" looked "for the children and kept on bowing and smiling for half an hour." And when she disappeared and the priest wished to see her, he called out "Mary!" Needless to say, "Our Lady" appeared at once and said: "I want to speak to you. I want you to be good to the poor, and in seven years from now I will come for you." The priest died exactly seven years later.

The other woman first saw "Our Lady," then on a second occasion with St. Joseph, and on a third, with St. Joseph and St. John. She also testified to some wonderful cures at the shrine. It is with this kind of hopeless and ignorant credulity, the Roman Catholic Church wishes to impress the world with the "holiness" of Knock. But most intelligent people will see in the accounts we have copied from the *Universe* exactly the way in which the Christian imposture of the Resurrection and other pious marvels was built up. The leopard can never change his spots.

As for Lourdes, pilgrimages there are in full swing—with very poor results of "miraculous" healing so far. But it is worth noting that a Church of England vicar told a Catholic that "too much can be made of a person getting out of a bath chair, and not enough of the spiritual benefits received." This is wonderful consolation for a bed-ridden invalid, always in pain and hoping for a miracle, is it not? What earthly use are spiritual comforts to a man or woman who has gone blind—surely one of the greatest of all calamities—and who expects a pilgrimage to Lourdes will cure him? The fact is that these "miraculous" cures are occurring less and less, simply because the investigation has to be more thorough. And Roman Catholics don't like it.

The *News-Chronicle* give us an illustration of the Duke of Kent's new car, and informs us that it is furnished with two medals of St. Christopher. The idea apparently is that if a medal of St. Christopher is helpful towards warding off accidents, two medals is doubly so. To which we would say, *And so, ad infinitum*. It would seem a wise precaution to have the car lined with these ornamentations. Those who sell the medals will be pleased, but there will be no reduction in premiums for those who carry the medals.

Nearly two columns of what some people may profanely call "nonsense" are filled in the *Church Times* leading article, in which the words His Body and Blood, Reservation, Eternal Sacrifice, Apostolic Church, Blessed Sacrament, Adorable Presence, Soul and Divinity seem to be inextricably mixed. It is all what the Church would call "theology," and has about as much sense as the welter of words coming from a Gypsy Smith or a Billie Sunday. It will, of course, convince all who are already convinced, particularly those who still believe that the "Blessed Sacrament" is literally "the real Presence," however meaningless such nonsense may be to sensible people.

Hugh Redwood, Big Fish of the Bouverie Street Bible-boasters, dilates on the 61st Convention at Keswick. Missionaries, "clergy and ministers" (so Hughie separates the two), are to launch a "Great Peace Drive," and "strike some deep note of Christian fellowship which will echo round the world." (If only they had a Chaliapin!) But listen, folks; "... the Convention leaders are not afraid of open allusion to Second Advent beliefs." The invitation contains this passage:—

There is a growing conviction that we are on the eve of some great crisis. It may be that this crisis includes

the return of our Lord—the blessed hope of the believer and the only complete solution of the world's problems. It may be. On the other hand it may not be.

The meeting-place of the Convention—Keswick—prompts the comment that it is "strange and peculiar" that the Holy Ghost loves to manifest itself in such salubrious spots. When the Convention meets at, say, Bury or Stockport, we promise a congratulatory paragraph.

Since writing the above, Mr. Redwood has had to report that the Lord is "making Faith difficult," even for the fervent believers who annually migrate to Keswick. The immense Gospel Tent, holding four thousand of the faithful, has been uprooted by a violent gale, and the faithful got a very severe wetting, to say nothing of physical and spiritual shock. Their spirit has not, however, been damped, we are assured; it is hoped that £10,000 will be subscribed so that a ferro-concrete building may be erected and the incalculable pranks of the Lord circumvented for the future. In this way, of course, good comes out of evil, a sentiment which those who "get their hand down" will view, we surmise, with some misgiving.

The Manchester County Coroner, Mr. R. Stuart Rodger, has been giving his opinions about world affairs. The only requisite now is that the world should sit up and take notice:

All I can say is that if there had been more prayer at the deliberations at Geneva, there would not have been such a tangled mess in the world to-day.

The implication is that God demands personal recognition before he will stir himself. Until then, the world can stew in its own juice. Truly man made God in his own image. *Thou shalt have no other Gods before me—for I, the Lord thy God am a jealous God.*

Ex-Dean Inge writes cheerfully about death, in the *Evening Standard*. Apparently he believes in as little an amount of immortality as the editor of this journal. He quotes with praise the brave words of Lewis Nettleship: "Death does not count," and refers to "Walt Whitman's really noble welcome to Death." Dr. Inge admits that "the teaching of the Church has been that only a small minority escape eternal punishment." Dr. Inge is an optimist. Most churches still teach this "awful picture," as he calls it, and his own church has never officially repudiated it.

The absurd Bishop of Chichester's excommunication of Mr. J. B. Bunting is condemned by almost all decent people—not, of course, because excommunication is any worse or more effective than the Curse of the Bishop of Rheims in the *Ingoldsby Legends*—a story which it mainly resembles. The real moral, as pointed out by *Time and Tide*, is that the Bishop, basing his conduct on religious authorities, "adopts a standard not higher but lower than that of human justice." But that is characteristic of all "Divine" justice.

Can it be that the *Literary Digest* of New York, has taken seriously to heart the advice we recently gave the editor of that invaluable cosmopolitan compendium? We ventured to object to the headline occurring every week: "Religion and Social Service"—we said the two things had no connexion with each other. In the latest number reaching us (dated July 4). "Social Service" stands alone, and "Religion" is not even amongst the "also rans."

We do not pretend to believe that snobbery and toadyism have reached their "ultimate" climax. But when these qualities are combined with religious advertising we think they reach a very high stage. At Hunstanton, the fashionable seaside resort near the Royal Estate at

Sandringham, the local clerics have joined in a collective appeal—signed by the Vicar of Hunstanton and the Ministers of the Methodist and another church in the town. And this is the wording of their advertisement: "Follow the Example of King George V. and attend Public Worship." Well, all church-going is a question of "follow my leader," and so far one may as well follow King George as anyone else.

Canon Parmentier fixed Sunday for blessing "motor-cars, motor-cycles, bicycles, and other vehicles belonging to members of his congregation." This is most interesting, and would be still more if only he guaranteed that each vehicle so blessed would never take part in an accident. Unfortunately, this would be considered "tempting" the Lord, and so the blessed motor-cars, etc., are just as likely to cause some fatal smash-up as the unblessed ones. Query: What is the use of this blessing one way or t'other?

There are some people who always feel constrained to separate "true" Christianity from "Churchianity," as they call somebody else's Christianity. We are pleased to note that Dr. Jackson, the rector of Astbury, will have none of this tomfoolery. He said in a sermon the other day, "We must not tamper with the truth of God, and try and separate Christianity from Churchmanship." He insists that there is but "one Church, the Church of the Living God," and "it was founded before a word of the Bible was written." In the Bible, "there is more about this Church, its history, its errors, its priests, its prophets, its worship and organization, its privileges and responsibilities than anything else." In other words, Christianity and Churchianity are really one, and Dr. Jackson spent a long time in proving it. For our part, we even go further; we say that it was Churchianity which civilized "true" Christianity.

There is a pretty quarrel going on at the moment on the question of Transubstantiation, due to the publication of a paper recently read to the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament. The Rev. Reginald Kingdon seems to believe exactly as do Roman Catholics, and said so at the meeting; and the *Church Times* is very angry that he should have said that the real, genuine doctrine of Transubstantiation is not condemned in the Twenty-Eight Articles of Religion. It considers that Mr. Kingdon's "sort of intellectual fabric may be pretty, but it will not wash." The Church of England does not believe in the Church of Rome's Transubstantiation and Mr. Kingdon is "inexcusably misleading" in saying that it does—or at least, that it ought to.

### 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. FOOTÉ

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. H. SMITSON.—The firm you name would not exhibit the *Freethinker* for sale although they will get it to order. When approached some years ago the reply was simply that the protests of clergymen and other Christians made it an unprofitable proposition. We must continue to place reliance upon our friends. This is a hint to take advantage of our "Circulation Drive."

H. J. HASTINGS.—We have noted that Russia is adopting something of a democratic form. That is so much to the good. But there are obvious limits to the freedom allotted. This may be rendered necessary by the situation, but one need not shut one's eyes to it on that account. It is at any rate an obvious advance on what is taking place in some other countries.

J. WHITE.—Trust you will be successful in your hunt for a new subscriber. The number is mounting slowly, but still, mounting.

H.R.—Our business manager will be pleased to send you on a supply of back numbers of the *Freethinker* for circulation among your friends.

We have received an appeal for funds from the "Relief Committee for the Victims of Fascism," to which we gladly give publicity. We have ourselves subscribed to several of these funds, which is the best recommendation we can give. These victims of Fascism deserve all the help that can be given them. The address of the Committee is No. 1 Lichfield Street, Charing Cross Road, London, W.C.2.

H. WISHART.—We know full well we can rely upon your doing whatever lies in your power to help the *Freethinker*, in its attempt to secure a substantial increase in circulation.

S. MORTON suggests a very cheap edition of Mr. Cohen's *Four Lectures on Life and Religion*, and also of *Letters to a Country Vicar* as being highly suitable to place in the hands of Christian friends. Mr. Cohen has no objection, and would cheerfully give all rights in the two books as his contribution. But if they were sold at threepence they would involve a substantial loss. Our correspondent offers £5 towards the cost of the experiment.

R. THOMAS.—Pleased to enrol your name in our slowly-forming army of helpers.

A CORRESPONDENT asks for the reference to a poem which contains the lines, "It is a lie, their priests, their creeds," etc.? Perhaps some of our readers can oblige.

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

It is interesting to note that the *Church Times*, despite its declaration that the Government forces are fiercely anti-clerical, points out that both sides are "equally ruthless." Meanwhile there seems no doubt that the churches have been used as fortresses for the rebel troops, and even the *Daily Express* correspondent points out that the Church towers have been used as sniping posts. And if any country in the world had good reason to be anti-clerical it is Spain.

Among the people who were brought away from Barcelona by a British gunboat was Dr. Maria Montessori, the famous educationalist. In the *Daily Telegraph* for August 4, she is reported as saying that she was never in danger, and also that in Barcelona:—

The priests had taken an active part in the fighting, and I believe most of the danger to the churches was caused by stocks of ammunition left inside them.

It is as well to make a note of the various statements by British residents in Spain. They may be useful when the reckoning comes, and a saner opinion formed than would otherwise be the case.

*A Selection of Poems* has just been published at One Shilling (Bradford; Cawthra and Luscombe), by Mr. B. I. Bowers, a name well-known to Yorkshire Freethinkers. Mr. Bowers (Veritas) has written verses which are full of the spirit of Freethought and give ample evidence that as a humanist he is intent on getting full value out of Life's adventure as long as he has the chance. His good humour permeates the volume; he loves his game of Chess and Bowls; he puts zest into his morning cup of coffee. He brims over with Goodwill towards Men—and other Animals; he is impatient only with those who would hamper the Joy of Living with unproved dogmas and self-ministering speculations.

From the Melbourne *The Rationalist*:—

The Catholic Church of St. Francis in Melbourne is now staffed by the Fathers of the Blessed Sacrament, a more or less contemplative order, recently introduced into Australia for the first time. These Fathers seem to specialize on small candles, which cost the worshipper 3d. each, and which are lighted and placed on a stand before one of the altars. We have counted as many as 200 of these candles burning at one time, and on many occasions which we have visited this church we have not found at any hour of the day less than 80 such candles burning. Making a test on one of these candles, we found that it burnt for 70 minutes. We venture to say that the production cost of these candles is only a very small fraction of a penny. As we have said, they cost the people who light them 3d. each, and we presume that the people who light them are seeking heavenly favours. By so doing they are at least bestowing earthly favour on the Fathers of the Blessed Sacrament, for we estimate that the profit derived from them must run into many thousands of pounds a year. Just fancy! Hundreds of pounds' profit from candles and votive lamps. There's money in religion if the business is worked aright!

Mr. G. Whitehead will be lecturing in Leeds for a week, beginning to-day (August 9) with a meeting outside Leeds Town Hall, at 7.30 p.m. The local N.S.S. will co-operate, and hopes to add to its membership as a result of Mr. Whitehead's visit. The Branch has some enthusiastic workers and a comfortable lecture hall has been engaged for indoor meetings which will begin in the early part of September. Members and sympathizers are asked to keep in touch with the local Secretary, Mr. M. Feldman, 58 Meanwood Road, Leeds, from whom all particulars may be obtained.

The Preston Branch N.S.S. is arranging an excursion for the Lakes for Sunday, August 23. A motor coach

will carry the excursionists, and passengers will be picked up at Bolton, Chorley and Preston. The fare from Bolton and Chorley will be 6s. 6d., from Preston 5s. 6d. Non-members and their friends may join the party. Those wishing to join should write as early as possible to the Branch Secretary, Mrs. B. Coward, Brookside, Fernyhalgh Lane, Fullwood, Via Ribbleson, Preston. The trip should be a very enjoyable one, and summer *must* come some time. Even the rain can't last for ever.

## Epistolary Pearls From The Archives of Edessa

### I.

Copy of a Letter which was written by Abgar the toparch to Jesus, and sent to him at Jerusalem by the courier Ananias.

Abgar, toparch of Edessa, to Jesus the good Saviour, who hath appeared at Jerusalem, sendeth greeting. I have heard of thee, and of thy cures, performed without herbs, or other medicines. For it is reported that thou makest the blind to see, and the lame to walk: that thou cleansest the lepers, and castest out unclean spirits and demons, and healest those who are troubled with diseases of long standing, and raisest the dead. Having heard of all these things concerning thee, I conclude in my mind, one of two things: either that thou art God come down to do these things, or else thou art a Son of God, and so performest them. Wherefore I now write unto thee; entreating thee to come to me, and to heal my distemper. Moreover, I hear that the Jews murmur against thee, and plot to do thee mischief. I have a city, small indeed, but neat which may suffice for us both.

### II.

The Rescript of Jesus to the toparch Abgar, sent by the courier Ananias.

Abgar, thou art happy, forasmuch as thou hast believed in me. For it is written concerning me, that they who have seen me should not believe in me, that they who have not seen me might believe and live. As for what thou hast written to me desiring me to come to thee, it is necessary that all those things, for which I am sent, should be fulfilled by me here: and that after fulfilling them, I should be received up to him that sent me. When therefore I shall have been taken up, I will send unto thee some one of my disciples, that he may heal thy distemper, and give life to thee, and to those that are with thee.

The above letters are given by Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History*.<sup>1</sup> He says that at his day they existed among the public records in the Archives of Edessa; and that they were taken thence by, or for, him, and translated word for word from the Syriac language into the Greek tongue. He also furnishes a very precise and circumstantial report of the affair mentioned in the letters; and says that this account was written in the same language, and preserved in the same place as the letters were, the translation from the Syriac into the Greek being literal in the case of both documents. The chief points in the aforesaid report are as follows:—

After Christ's ascension, Judas, *alias* Thomas, sent "the Apostle Thaddæus, one of the seventy," unto Edessa, where he abode with Tobias, son of Tobias, and wrought many miracles. Hearing of these, Abgar thought that Thaddæus must be the promised healer. He therefore summoned and questioned Tobias, sending him back to fetch Thaddæus. Early next day the two appeared before Abgar, who at once worshipped Thaddæus because of a lustre about him which the other spectators failed

to perceive. Abgar then asked if Thaddæus were "a disciple of Jesus the Son of God," who had promised to send one thither to cure him of his illness. Thaddæus replied that his arrival was due to the faith of Abgar, and that if this faith increased, Abgar would in accordance with its increase obtain the gratification of all his desires. Hereupon, Abgar professed to have so strong a faith in Christ that but for his dread of "the Roman power," he would avenge Christ's crucifixion by "extirpating the Jews." Thaddæus then proclaimed the ascension of Christ, to which Abgar replied, "I have believed in him and in his Father." Hearing this confession the apostle touched the toparch "in the name of the Lord Jesus"; and healed him immediately "without herbs or other medicines." At the same time and in the same way he also cured "Abdus, son of Abdus, who had the gout." Thereafter Thaddæus wrought so many curative and other miracles in the city that Abgar asked him for a complete account of Christ, which he promised to give on the morrow, if Abgar would assemble all the citizens to hear it; and even straight away he gave him an outline (concisely reported) of his next day's address to the people. Abgar ordered the assembly and offered Thaddæus a gift of "gold and silver," which he promptly declined. "The three hundred and fortieth year" of some un-stated era is given at the end of the report as the date when "these things occurred."<sup>2</sup>

Here the Eusebian account (let us call it the E.A.) reaches its conclusion, and we might have heard no further details of the affair had not Cureton discovered, translated and published a work entitled *The Doctrine of Addæus the Apostle*, which I have already cited.<sup>4</sup>

This in its original form no doubt reported, as Eusebius has done, the appeal of Abgar to Christ; and gave, as he has given, a copy of the letters said to have passed between them respecting the matter, but in its present form it begins abruptly at the point where Abgar, after confessing his faith in Christ and in God the Father, was healed by Thaddæus *alias* Addæus of his painful malady. Then it runs parallel with the E.A. until this ends at the refusal of the apostle to receive money from the King. The two accounts have a difference of nine lines in length, and they vary a little in their details. The E.A. makes Thaddæus request Abgar to have all the citizens assembled on the morrow that he himself may give them instruction, and it also makes Thaddæus describe to Abgar his proposed discourse; but it does not report that next day, or at any later time Thaddæus did instruct the people in the manner which he had described or in any other way. On the contrary the D.O.A. (or *Doctrine of Addæus*), whilst recording the request of Addæus for the assemblage of the people on the morrow, does not record that he gave any outline of what he would say to them on this occa-

<sup>2</sup> In making the above account Dindorf's Greek text (*Teubner Leipzig, 1890*) and Lardner's English version (*Works, London, 1835, Vol. VI., pp. 596-605*) were carefully compared. The original was translated by Eusebius, or by one of his helpers, from the Aramaic into the Greek, and Cureton, thinking that this translator had missed the precise sense of certain terms, sought to rectify the pericope by rendering it into English from an ancient Aramaic version of the work containing it. (pp. 1-7). Thus "Abgar toparch of Edessa" is correctly defined as "Abgar vchama, Chief of the Country"; "Ananias the Courier," gets, rightly or wrongly, the far higher title of "Ananias the Tabularius," whilst "the Syrian tongue," twice mentioned, is, on both occasions, altered for the better into "the Aramaic" language.

<sup>3</sup> pp. 6-23 up to p. 8 line 4, the text is from a manuscript "certainly not later than the beginning of the fifth century." Thenceforth it is from one apparently of the sixth century, Cod A, to which I have previously referred.

<sup>4</sup> See *Martyrs of Edessa*.

<sup>1</sup> B.I. c. 13.

sion; and instead of letting Addæus address the multitude on the morrow, it represents him as addressing the king, the dowager queen, the reigning queen, the princes, and the nobles, immediately upon his refusal of the money offered to him at the time when he had just arranged with the King for the assembling of the citizens on the morrow. Still, strange to say, although the above speech is thus represented as having been made to the King and his court; yet, after it has been reported, statements are made which clearly imply that numerous citizens were present when it was being delivered.

The speech itself occupies 135 lines and there are three gaps in it. At the end, in answer to the invitation of Addæus, many of the citizens remained with him for prayer, and even the few who departed were soon afterwards converted. As for Abgar, he saw the confirmation of everything that his Tabularius, Hanan, had told him about Christ; and also of what had been said in his own letter to Christ and in Christ's letter to him. He therefore promised to worship Christ, and to give Addæus the means for building a church, and for establishing a class to be occupied solely with ministerial tasks. The courtiers pressed Addæus to tell them whatever he could remember of Christ; and they accepted his words with joy and sincerity, no one being able to withstand him because of his "glorious acts." The two chief priests of Edessa "ran and threw down the altars of Nebu and Bel, their gods, except the great altar in the midst of the city." Addæus received the converted idolators, baptizing them "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the spirit of holiness." Even the Jewish merchants, "skilled in the law and the prophets," became disciples, confessing Christ to be "the Son of the living God." Moreover, "all this country of Mesopotamia, and all the regions round about it," embraced Christianity, although neither Abgar nor Addæus used force to convert any man. Addæus received into the ministry Aggæus,<sup>5</sup> Palut, Barshelma, and Barsamya, giving them the necessary instruction, and studying with them "the Old Testament, and the New, and the Prophets, and the Acts of the Apostles."<sup>6</sup> They ministered with him in the church which Abgar had caused to be erected. There "a large multitude came to prayers, and to the reading of the Old Testament, and the New of the *Ditornon*."

<sup>5</sup> See *Martyrs of Edessa* previously cited.

<sup>6</sup> Cureton, p. 15.

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

(To be continued)

## The Toxford Troupe

This amazing company, whose principal item is "All Change Here!" has thrilled many pietists with its acrobatic feats. Its patron saint is Saint Bogus, and its motto is "Hustle, and I'll come tae ye me lad." Its principal performers comprise titled toffs, pushing parsons, converted caddies, segregated stars, happy housemaids and dope detectors. It has got a cinch on the timid advocates of co-operation between Church and State by striking out on its own, and putting sacred words to secular tunes. No doubt this last feat was anticipated by "Booth's Blood and Fire Bumpers"; but the Toxford Troupe has successfully aimed at more "refrained" methods of musical association, and has been able to capture as patrons several stage ladies—gifted singers and high kickers—like Totty Two-Shoes, Flossy Forward and Magdalene Montmorency. It has thus got well into

the limelight and bids fair to rival Aimée McPherson's shows on the other side of the Atlantic. While optimists believe this emulation will lead to more cordial relations between America and Britain, as in the case of Moody and Sankey, and Gipsy Smith, there are pessimists who see in it the possibility of unfriendliness. But the slogan of the Toxford Troupe is, "All nations for God—and damn the consequences!"

The Established Ecclesiastical Corporations as well as the Plymouth Brethren, the Methodists, the Wee Frees and the Muckle Frees and the Bethelites have adopted an attitude of caution if not antagonism to the happy and enthusiastic butterfly boys and girls of the Toxford Troupe. But many Liberal Modernists have hailed its performances with joyous acclaim. They believe that the institution of the Troupe and its propaganda of "sharing" will get God out of most of his present difficulties by securing the allegiance of all sorts and conditions of men and women. There is essentially and inevitably a difficulty as to what is or is not to be "shared." When this point was put to one of the principals of the Troupe, she brightly remarked, "Oh, of course, it is our *experiences* that we share; and we tell one another how we found the light!"

The Troupe claims that regular attendance at its performances and participation in its choruses will effectually change the slacker into a busy bee; the swindler into an honest person; the hater into a lover; and the tyrant into a brother. It is out to fertilize the desert and to make it blossom like the rose. And it means to do it in shorts, blazers, flannel bags and seaside pyjamas. No black outfit or dog collars for the gay Toxfordites! Naturally many of the high dignitaries of the Established Churches frown on such costumes. For where are the country and religion going to land if respect is withdrawn from the holy men garbed in cassocks, surplices, albs, stoles and becoming black berets? However, several contend that variety is the spice of life; and it is jolly for the general public to have the opportunity of selecting from various companies of actors. You pays your money and you takes your choice! And the Toxford Troupe hopes to score by unconventionality and colourfulness. It means to ring the bells of Heaven to some purpose.

That reminds one of the popular "Belle of New York," which gave such a helpful advertisement to "Booth's Blood and Fire Bumpers." It is a hint to the Toxford Troupe. Without being "vulgar" it could readily devise and produce a play suited to the mentality and taste of Americanized collegians with a minimum of cymbal-banging and tambourine rattling. Totty Two-Shoes, Flossy Forward and Magdalene Montmorency would be an effective trio—partnered with three male students—in a musical comedy or revue, which in the summer months they could render at the sea-side in tricky bathing costumes. It would be a pleasing picture to watch such a sextet in a religious dance waving aloft coloured glasses of non-alcoholic cocktails! Something *really* colourful if you please!

Go it, you Toxford Troupists! The world badly wants changing; and your "All Change Here!" stunt may do the trick. But mind your steps. There are sceptical foes all about you as well as old-established rivals who started with the same magniloquent professions as yourselves, but who are still continually threshing the same old straw. At the least, you are doubtless adding to the gaiety, if not to the immediate reconciliation, of nations! Still, you know, hope springs eternal. So, go it, my bucks: keep on doing it!

IGNOTUS.

## Thomas Paine and the American Revolution

ADMIRERS of Thomas Paine are raising a fund to commemorate the bi-centenary of his birth (January 29, 1937). A noted American sculptor, Mr. Gutzon Borglum, is working on a statue to be erected in Paris. Mr. Borglum's labour is, I understand, a labour of love.

American men, women and children should never forget the debt of gratitude they owe to the great Englishman, who has been described as: "The intellectual founder of the American Republic." This quotation is not only a grand compliment—it is also a precise valuation of the quality of his special services to the embryonic United States of America.

Thomas Paine landed in America in the year 1774. From the day of his arrival, at the age of thirty-seven, his subsequent activities were impelled by social and political ideas of a republican character. He desired to establish in America a system of society where no anomalous hereditary privileges would be sanctioned.

Liberty, Equality and Fraternity—the ideals of the Eighteenth Century Republicans—were to him, not merely political, social, and philosophical abstractions robed in romantic and idealistic fantasy—but vital and attainable realities.

Thomas Paine took full advantage of the unsettled economic conditions, and of the general political dissatisfaction prevailing, to inculcate the idea of separation into the minds of the Colonists—thus preparing them for the inevitable conflict against England.

He did this by writing articles and pamphlets, in which he made use of ethical considerations of justice, logical arguments of practical utility, and emotional appeals to expediency.

In the year 1776, Thomas Paine wrote *Common Sense*, one of the most effective political pamphlets ever written. Though Paine was a poor man, he gave the enormous profits derived from the sale of his pamphlet to advance the American Republican cause. Washington, Jefferson and other Colonial leaders were seeking a means of reconciliation with England; but after reading *Common Sense*, they, with the majority of the Colonists, were converted to Paine's opinions.

When hostilities commenced, Thomas Paine joined the American Forces as an ordinary soldier. While on active service, he wrote at night-time by the light of the camp fires, another series of pamphlets which he called: *The American Crisis*.

Parts of *The American Crisis* were read to the assembled soldiers. Its effect was amazing—the starving, almost naked, nearly defeated, American soldiers were inspired to more intensive efforts, which culminated in their victory and Independence.

*The American Crisis* begins with these words: "These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country, but he that stands it now deserves the love and thanks of man and woman." These words seem even now a thrilling challenge to human endeavour—a clarion call for stoical endurance, to the bravest and the best!

The name of Thomas Paine has been besmeared by Christian slander on both sides of the Atlantic. But none of the slanderers of the Meeting Houses, the Bethels, and the Churches, are now honourably remembered—none have had such a glorious tribute paid to them as the verbal wreath bestowed by Robert Green Ingersoll: "Without the name of Thomas Paine the history of liberty cannot be written."

THOMAS WILLIAMS.

## Daily Events that Foretell the End of the Churches

It has surprised me here in Sydney (N.S.W., Australia) to note how the drift from Christianity is revealed in the daily press reports of happenings within the Church itself.

Let me begin with a reference to two items in the *Daily Telegraph* of to-day's date—May 20.

We read: "Run Like Rats from Church. It is a common thing for church people to scuttle like rats after the last hymn, without pausing for the blessing, said the Rev. Boyd Scott yesterday, in his farewell address at Scots' Church." On another page is the heading, "Church Warden Bound Over." The charge on which he had been convicted was that of taking 2s. from the offertory! A constable, giving evidence, said, "A man who would steal 2s. from the collection plate is nothing but a low-down sneak."

All the other events that I here propose to narrate—humorous and tragic; but, above all, illustrative—are merely the things that we have been reading in the Sydney daily papers within the past fortnight. The past fortnight, I repeat. For it has become practically the same diversion the whole year round.

A cable from Auckland (New Zealand) says: "Saturday-night dancing makes people too tired for church on Sundays," declares the Rev. K. J. McFarland, who has made elaborate proposals for an altered week-end. He suggests that Sunday should commence at sunset on Saturday, and continue until sunset on Sunday, after which picture theatres and cabarets could be opened. He claims that the scheme would be good for cabaret and theatre managers, who—instead of having one big night on Saturday—would have two big nights, Sunday and Monday."

Next heading is this: "Clergyman Hurls Brick Through Merrylands Church Window."

Merrylands is a suburb of Sydney. The clergyman referred to is the Rev. W. Breach. "Mr. Breach, who says that the church was especially built for him, asserts that he was locked out some time ago, when the donor of the church died, and the executors of the will decided that a Free Church was no longer necessary." To-day, "jazz parties and boxing bouts" are held there. Thus it was, in protest, that Mr. Breach hurled a brick through the window. "When the matter was referred to Professor A. J. Abbott, of the British-Israelite Association, he said, 'It was a most un-Christianlike thing to do. Mr. Breach has only himself to blame for not leaving the church to-day.'"

Then we come to a telegram from Melbourne.

This reads: "Minister Welcomes Hikers. Wants Films in Church. A promise of a hearty welcome to people who attended his church in tennis-kit or hiking-clothes was made to-day by a Congregational clergyman, Rev. P. Bothwell, of Bendigo. He said it was time there was less stiffness about church-going. Services should be held at times to suit the convenience of those who wished to play games. There should be religious films and plays in church, and a little humour now and then."

The next extract reads: "Church Not All It Might Be. The most earnest and zealous of us are not satisfied that in Sydney the church is all that it might be," the Archbishop of Sydney (Dr. Mowll) said yesterday."

Even franker are the confessions that follow.

"Children who really wanted to go to Sunday-school have been forced to go out with their parents—perhaps in a car, perhaps because the mother was going to play tennis," said the Rev. C. A. White at the Presbyterian Assembly. The Assembly was discussing the decline in Sunday-school attendances. "Three-fifths of our children," remarked C. J. R. Price (Director of the Welfare of Youth Department), "belong to parents who do not attend church." At the same Assembly, Rev. D. J. Floekhart is reported saying, "To-day, when you confront a person who has not been attending church, you get the answer, 'What is the use of the church, and what does it mean to me?'"

Let us here have another telegraphed message from Melbourne.

"Olympian on Muscular Christianity. Gerald Backhouse, the middle distance runner who will leave for Berlin on Tuesday with the Australian Olympic Team, will be seen in a new role to-morrow night. At St. Stephen's Church, Richmond, he will take the pulpit, and preach the occasional sermon, 'Muscular Christianity.' The entire church service will be taken over by St. Stephen's Harriers. Subsequently the athletes and visitors will be entertained at supper in the church hall by the President of St. Stephen's Harriers (Rev. L. L. Wenzall) and the churchwardens."

Then we have the report of the deputation from the Sydney churches to the Acting Premier (Mr. Bruxner) regarding Sunday observance. A brief extract:—

"The Rev. A. C. White (Presbyterian Church), who pleaded for restriction of Sunday trading, said that he did so to have removed a temptation to children to spend money given to them for their Sunday-school.

"R. P. Arnott complained that Sunday was being commercialized at the expense of the people's well-being, adding, 'Unnecessary work should be stopped.'

"Mr. Bruxner: Supposing people wanted to come to the city to worship—and asked the Government for a train for this purpose—would you say that the Railway Department should refuse to carry them?

"Mr. Arnott: If they wanted to worship, they would be justified in coming to the city on the Lord's Day.

"Mr. Bruxner: And the Government justified in carrying them?

"Mr. Arnott: Yes."

Comment throughout what I have been relating is unnecessary. But here let me link-up Mr. Bruxner—who, in the foregoing exchanges, pretty clearly shows what he thought of his deputationists—with a further episode in my recital of the despairing, shattered state of the church. A widely-representative, clerical protest was entered, a few days after this deputation, respecting a car reliability contest, exclusive to women drivers, promoted by a Sydney weekly called *Woman*—to be held on a Sunday. The contest went ahead, just the same, without the least notice of the protest being taken by the proprietary of that paper. And a competitor in it was no less a personage than Mrs. Bruxner—the wife of the Acting Premier!

We have, too, these extracts from an address by Dr. Burgmann, Anglican Bishop of Goulburn (N.S.W.), delivered at the Anglican Congress, held in Sydney:

"It doesn't seem possible to reconcile Christianity with either the Italian or the German form of Fascism, or with any extreme form of economic imperialism.

"The great Russian experiment seems to me a thing of far greater promise, in spite of the profession of Atheism on the part of its creators and leaders.

"Churches are always a danger to religion. They become interested in their own aggrandisement and power, and are too busy to live close to the people.

"Churchmen get interested in a world beyond this world, largely to escape the trouble of setting right the wrongs that afflict the human race."

Could there be—from within the church itself—a more damning indictment than this, particularly in the references to the churches being more or less wholly concerned with their own "aggrandisement and power," and in churchmen being "interested in a world beyond this world," so as to avoid the responsibility of doing anything of genuine service to their fellow human-beings?

Take the whole of the citations given from the outset of this article.

What do they portend? Clearly, the disintegration of the church. More and more is it revealed that the attendances are diminishing—that the public, in increasingly large numbers, are awakening to the hypocrisy and imposture of the clergy and the creed they propound. How else can be explained the clerical devices to which we find them resorting, in the hope of bucking up their ever-languishing congregations—that, in this respect, they are prepared to go to the very limit in everything that is paltry and contemptible?

Happily, the way the church is thus proclaiming its own doom—here in Australia, from day to day, through

the papers—is, it is safe to assume, the common experience throughout the rest of what is regarded as the Christianized world.

All I desire to add are a few words respecting a matter that comes within a somewhat different category.

Here, a few weeks ago, a young fellow, Edwin J. Hickey, was executed for a particularly brutal murder. With the subject of capital punishment—whether it should or should not be inflicted—I am not here concerned. Pending his execution, Hickey was attended by a Catholic priest. The result was that, following these ministrations, we got through the papers Hickey's statement that he was confident of going to heaven.

Further, during the period for which the execution was fixed, a special mass was held for him at a Roman Catholic Church at Dubbo—a township some distance from Sydney.

Then came, through the papers, a declaration by Dr. Kelly (Catholic Archbishop of Sydney) as to the attitude of that church regarding sinners, repentance, and salvation. This is sufficiently defined in one of his sentences, as follows: "Thus, to speak to the point, Christian repentance will make the scaffold itself a special atonement, a proper preparation for a merciful judgment after death, which means eternal salvation—a place among the just in the happiness of God for all eternity."

Perhaps Hickey's victim was similarly "prepared."

But what if he wasn't? Presumably, by the Christian process, enunciated by Archbishop Kelly, the victim would be consigned to everlasting hell-fire. Very triumphant, therefore, must we regard the lot of the murderer—all through being given time for repentance and salvation.

Of course the Catholic view in this connexion is that of the churches generally.

But is not this a conception of things, utterly opposed to all sanity and reason? The law pronounces a man as unworthy to live among his fellows—even to continue to exist in this world. Yet—by a profession of sorrow and a belief in Christ—he passes forthwith into the company of God and a state of joy that is to endure for ever!

With a slight variation of a Hardy phrase, I can only say, "Such may be a dispensation good enough for a Divinity; but it must be scorned and despised by every decent human being."

FRANK HILL.

Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.

## Correspondence

### BELFAST AND FREE SPEECH

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

SIR,—Will you kindly permit me to offer a few observations on the reference by Mr. Egerton Stafford to conditions in Northern Ireland under the Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act of 1922. While I am well aware that the *Freethinker* does not concern itself with politics, I am hopeful that you will find yourself able to print this, as the matter is as much concerned with religion as with politics. I write on the question on the ground that I am a Southern Irishman, and, having lived in Belfast, may perhaps be permitted to flatter myself that I know something of the problem.

I submit:—

1. That Belfast is, and always was, the most progressive City in Ireland, in the best sense of the word.
2. The Special Powers Act is directed against a gang who have no interest in progress, free speech or liberty, but whose one desire is to put an end to all three.
3. There is absolutely no ban in Northern Ireland on legitimate propaganda for an Irish Republic, Communism, Freethought, Malthusianism, or anything else.
4. The Northern Government is Ireland's only bulwark against Rome Rule, Fascism and gangster politics.

As regards 1, since the setting-up of the "Free" State the progressive elements have practically all been driven out, the remaining few having to lie low, or risk their livelihoods and even their lives. Rome Rule being in full swing in "Southern" Ireland, there is no longer any liberty of expression. One is compelled to keep one's views to oneself, or risk being "slugged" by a gang of Catholic Actionists possessed of Stone Age mentalities. I saw several cases of this during a residence in the "Free" State, 1930/33. Early in 1933 I saw the Communist Club in Dublin set on fire, and men and women suspected of progressive opinions beaten, stoned, fired on and mobbed by crowds chanting "God Bless Our Pope." The consequence of all this is that the progressive elements have tended to concentrate on Belfast, where they can state their opinions without let or hindrance. A study of any history of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century will confirm my statement that Belfast has always been the most progressive part of Ireland.

2. The Northern Government brought in the Special Powers Act in 1922, after a campaign of murder, arson, and savagery, lasting from early 1919, and initiated and kept up by Irish Republicans, who have no understanding of the true meaning of the word Republic, but whose one idea is to obtain a State dominated and controlled by the Vatican Gang. I am well aware that this period was also marked by outrages committed by Orangemen, but it cannot be denied that the whole thing was commenced by the Republicans. Their leaders boast of it in the memoirs issued under their names.

3. There is no ban on legitimate propaganda. An example of this is the fact that two Republicans stood and were elected for Northern Constituencies at the last General Election. This also happened several times before 1935. Also one can attend Socialist, Communist and other meetings, where every shade of opinion is given vent to, which is certainly not the case in Dublin. If a Dublin lecturer were to mention the name of Mr. Chapman Cohen, a name well-known and admired in Belfast, he would stand a very good chance of being the central figure at a funeral shortly after. Also it is possible to obtain in Belfast, Communist, Anarchist, Freethought and other publications, which are absolutely banned in the "Free" State.

4. Should the elements opposing the Ulster Government triumph, and a Republic were proclaimed in Ireland, it would certainly not be the kind of Republic which we Freethinkers would like to see, but the kind which now obtains in Poland or Brazil, and which was in force in Mexico from 1822 to 1910, a State in which the word of the priest is law, where there is absolutely no freedom of expression, and the military-clerical element runs the whole show. The sort of State, in fact, which Southern Ireland is at present. Consequently the Ulster Government in opposing a strong front to those precious "Republicans" who are attempting to bring all Ireland under papal and gangster rule, are doing a great service (unwittingly, I imagine), to all lovers of liberty in their territory. It is not a coincidence that all parties in the "Free" State, from O'Duffy's gangster-Fascists to the Irish Republican Army, are agreed that Ulster must be brought under the heel of Dublin and Rome.

I apologize for the length of this letter, and hope you will find space to print it, as I think it is high time that Freethinkers understood the situation. There is too much humbug spoken about the situation in Ulster. I regret that I am unable to sign my full name to this—my reason is an adequate one.

A.

## CALVIN AND DIVORCE

SIR,—In your issue of August 2, the writer of "Sugar Plums" says: "Calvin's views on divorce were very strict."

That is a mistake. Both Luther and Calvin had fairly broad views on divorce, and all the countries which followed them have for centuries had a better divorce law than England has to-day.

The divorce law of Scotland dates from 1560. The

Courts of Scotland give divorce for either adultery or desertion, and the right to divorce is the same for the wife as for the husband. The fact that both parties have committed adultery is no bar to divorce. There is no King's Proctor, and no decree nisi. The judge, after hearing the case, gives final judgment on the spot.

A few years ago Lord Salvesen, a Scottish judge, addressing the Eugenics Society, said:—

"On this question of marriage reform England is, perhaps, the most priest-ridden of all the existing States of Europe, and it is the clergy of her State Church that have proved the chief obstacle to reform."

R. B. KERR.

[We think the greater freedom of Scotch law with regard to marriage is that it has kept more closely to the Roman Laws of Marriage.—EDITOR.]

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

## LONDON

## OUTDOOR

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

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Mr. Ebury. Highbury Corner, 8.0, Mr. Ebury. South Hill Park, 8.0, Monday, August 10, Mr. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 6.30, Mrs. E. Grout. Rushcroft Road, opposite Brixton Town Hall, 8.0, Mr. F. P. Corrigan. Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town, 8.0, Friday, August 14, Mrs. E. Grout.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Corner of Deanery Road, Water Lane, Stratford, E.): 7.0, Mrs. M. Saran.

ASHINGTON (Grand Corner): 7.0, Friday, August 7, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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.

## COUNTRY

## OUTDOOR.

ACCRINGTON: 7.0, Sunday, August 9, Mr. J. Clayton.  
BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Well Lane): 8.0, Tuesday, Mr. D. Robinson, A Lecture. Literature on sale.  
BURNLEY MARKET: 7.30, Tuesday, August 11, Mr. J. Clayton.

HIGHAM: 7.30, Monday, August 10, Mr. J. Clayton.  
LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Leeds Town Hall): 7.30, from Saturday, August 9 to Friday, August 14, Mr. G. Whitehead will speak each evening.

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

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Platt Fields): 3.0, Mr. Walter Atkinson—"Christianity and Freethought." 7.0, "Fascism, Communism and Freethought."

MORPETH (Market): 7.0, Saturday, August 8, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

NEWBIGGIN: 7.0, Sunday, August 9, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

NORTH SHIELDS (Harbour View): 7.0, Tuesday, August 12, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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

TRAWDEN: 7.45, Friday, August 7, Mr. J. Clayton.

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