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

## Views and Opinions

### The Fight For The Child

LAST week we referred to the arrangements made between the Education Committee of Blackpool and the local churches and chapels to organize religious services for children *during school hours*. The teachers were asked to take part in these processions by marching the children to and from the churches and chapels. Three hundred of the teachers refused, and at the Annual Meeting of the National Union of Teachers the action of the teachers was endorsed and promised the fullest support. Unfortunately the decision was taken at a private session, and that is *not* so good. For there does not seem any reason for a private session save the fear that teachers have, generally, of being victimised if they offend their religious masters in Church and Chapel and on the Education Committee. Otherwise there does not appear sufficient reason for the private session. Each teacher could have said publicly what he or she thought of the effort to make them more active cats-paws of the parsonry than they are at present. It may be noted, also, that where a profession of agreement with religious influence in the schools is involved the fullest publicity is given. But opposition must be whispered behind closed doors, for in open council the majority of members would be afraid to speak.

That kind of thing does not raise one's respect for the teaching profession in this country, nor does it heighten one's expectation of its developing a better type of character in public life. Educationalists should be before all things reformers; and reformers should be made of sterner stuff than this policy of the N.U.T. indicates. And one must bear in mind the fact that the N.U.T. is one of the strongest trades unions in the country, with plenty of funds behind it, and a membership that is sufficiently well-paid to contribute further funds if necessary. A teacher should be the master of his school, not one moving about in fear of offending the shifting, and often shifty, mem-

bers of an education committee and the bigotry of local preachers.

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### Disguised Sectarianism

But while the discussion of the Blackpool situation was held in private, the President of the Union, Mr. R. J. Patten, issued a public statement in which the action of the three hundred teachers was endorsed and the fullest support promised. Mr. Patten says:—

The local authority has used public machinery and spent public money in carrying out a religious poll on a denominational basis of the children of the Council Schools of the area through their parents, although the schools which their children attend are essentially undenominational in character. The local authority has taken the extraordinary course of sorting out council children into good little Roman Catholics, good little Anglicans, good little Nonconformists, and so far as those who stay at school are concerned, good little nothingarians.

This last expression refers to those children whose parents would not agree to their being marched to Church during school hours.

I quite agree with what is said by Mr. Patten, but there are qualifications. First of all the expression "undenominational" is itself misleading. It has only a Christian reference. It is undenominational with regard to the Christian sects, but it takes no cognizance of those outside the Christian ranks—save so far as the "Conscience clause" is concerned. The religious teaching in the schools represents the maximum on which Christians can agree. It is a bargain made between Christians, as the marching of Blackpool children to Church was a bargain between Christians. The rest of the community is practically ignored. The only privilege granted them is that they can go without a part of the school upkeep they are compelled to pay for. In existing circumstances "undenominationalism" is a disguised sectarianism.

I am thoroughly in agreement with Mr. Patten as to the undesirability of grouping children in State schools into sectarian batches, whether these sects be religious or political. The work of the school should be to lay the foundations on which the sense of a common social life may be based. But religion in the schools, even in its most harmless form, is a foundation of a sectarianism that has always been one of the most destructive enemies of social unity and development. Even though they are in the school separated merely as Christian and non-Christian, each must bear the school sectarian stamp; one group is a little different from another group. There is this indefinite sense of separateness created in the school that forms the basis of a definite separateness in after life. And neither in school life nor in after school life is this separateness there as a difference of opinion which carries with it a sense of fundamental union in the pursuit of a common purpose; it is a sense of difference



that divides as nothing else can. The N.U.T. itself, in the mere fact that its members are afraid to debate a religious issue in open conference, is proof of what has been said. Differences of opinion on any other subject may be discussed openly; where religion enters the members of the N.U.T. must discuss it as though afraid of being found out in the committing of a crime.

#### Religious Tests

The 300 teachers are afraid that their resistance to the wishes of the parsons and the Education Committee may lead to victimization, and it is a fair assumption that many of those who have given way were animated by the same fear. They are also afraid that it may lead to the strengthening of religious tests in the schools. I do not say the *introduction* of religious tests because they already exist. Not openly, but they are there. In several cases enquiries as to the religious opinions of teachers have been openly instituted; in many other cases applicants are asked their religious opinions, and in thousands of cases teachers are fearful of letting their disbelief in religion become known. In any genuine sense these are all examples of the working of religious tests, and when they operate by creating a fear of honest speech, you have one of the worst features of religious tests. And it is an ill-beginning to the task of character formation to force the teacher into hypocrisy as a first step towards teaching others straightforwardness.

In this matter the bigots have the better stand in reasoning. If religion is to be kept in the schools it should be taught by those who are—in terms of religious belief—able to teach it honestly and, again in terms of religion, truthfully. Some teachers—using Beelzebub to cast out Beelzebub—throw over the really religious part of the teaching and give their pupils an emasculated moral lesson. Others satisfy their conscience by insinuating scepticism in the act of teaching belief. In this matter the Catholics are the most logical of all; for they insist that religion must be taught in the proper “atmosphere” for it, and not in a manner which suggests it is of no great consequence. Religion, after all, is to-day something that has to be swallowed, not a thing to be digested at leisure. And the most favourable time for this deglutitive process is childhood. If the clergy fail here they fail all along the line.

The parsonry, I repeat, have the better reasoning on their side. If clients are to be provided for Church and Chapel they must be bred. Without the religious survivals of childhood the adult is beyond capture. But if religion is to be taught children it must be taught by those who understand what the Churches mean by religion, and who believe it themselves. To profess, as teachers do, in *open conference*, they are in favour of religious instruction, but are opposed to religious tests, is to confess to hypocrisy or foolishness. Such a position would not be taken up in relation to anything but religion, and it is no more sensible in relation to that than it is in regard to geography or history. So long as religion is in the schools so long religious tests will exist, either openly, to which a man may submit with the minimum of personal degradation, or covertly, in which case he adds hypocrisy to his submission.

#### Wanted, Courage

The President of the N.U.T. complains that the campaign in Blackpool

has been and continues to be a compound of ignorance, prejudice and hostility which ill-accords with the religious and spiritual professions of those responsible for it.

This is cant, sheer cant! When has the attitude

of the Christian priesthood, during the whole of its history, and in all its forms been different from that which the parsons and preachers of Blackpool are now showing? To assume, as does the President of the N.U.T., that there is something finely and supremely valuable behind these terms “religious and spiritual,” and that the Christian Church stands, or has ever stood for these things in an ethical or intellectual sense, is to add a little more humbug to the situation. The clergy need not fear very much while the teaching profession fools itself, or thinks it can fool others by such verbiage. The President complains that the moment the teachers exercised their liberty of refusal to march the children to Church they were made the subjects of attack by both the clergy and the Non-conformist ministers. But what else ought they to have expected? Is not this the way in which the clergy have always acted when their professional interests were threatened? Surely the members of the N.U.T. are not quite so foolish as to believe that when the ministers of religious, or religious people in general, say they will give those around them the full power to act as their consciences dictate, they mean it in the full sense of their words. No one expects the average teacher to be very much more intelligent than the average man or woman, but one does not expect from them such a manifestation of folly as to believe that when genuinely religious people talk about freedom of conscience they use the expression without qualifications and equivocations that rob their professions of a large part of its value.

If the N.U.T. wishes really to raise the level of the teaching profession, if it really wishes to be able to point to the teaching profession as a body of which the best men and women in the country may be genuinely and rightfully proud, they must begin by standing up for the real independence of the teacher, and to deny the right of the priest, either in person or by proxy, to dictate what interpretation shall be placed upon life. So long as religion is in the schools, so long the profession will be driving from its ranks many of the more sensitive and independent minds, so long will they have the religious tyranny which imposes religious tests openly or surreptitiously. So long as religion is in the schools the clergy are justified in insisting that it is properly taught by teachers who believe in it. So long as teachers passively accept the existence of religion in the schools, so long must they submit to tests openly or otherwise imposed. The only way out is for the teacher to insist that the proper function of the school in the modern State is to restrict instruction to purely secular subjects. He need not, as a teacher, oppose religion, but he must, as a teacher, insist that neither his freedom of speech nor of teaching must be hampered by organized religious bodies. If the priest is to be kept out of the State schools the subject on which he claims to be an authority must be kept outside.

#### The Black Hand

As we are correcting the proof of the above, we find from the *Lancashire Daily Post* of April 11, that the Chairman of the Education Committee has issued a statement to justify the action taken in sending the children to Church. The statement contains this:

The Blackpool Committee have noted with concern that fifty per cent of the children attending senior schools are attached to no place of worship or Sunday school, and there are good grounds for believing that in the case of the secondary school pupils this percentage is considerably higher. The Committee feels that the situation is serious.

Serious for whom? For what? It does not mean that the children are not being properly educated. It means—it can only mean—that it is serious for the



churches and chapels. *The schools are not doing their part in preparing the children as clients for Church and Chapel.* No other meaning can be attached to the passage.

Now I have no hesitation in saying that a Committee that makes a statement of this kind, and which take steps—official steps—to see that a larger proportion of children are attached to Sunday-school or places of worship, ought to be disbanded forthwith. If the Chairman is merely expressing his own opinion, he ought to be removed. The Committee was not elected for the purpose of seeing that the children attend church, and they are guilty of gross dishonesty in acting as they have done. The committee shows itself destitute of that sense of honesty which should be indispensable to men holding public office. They are elected for an exclusive purpose, and they endeavour to spend public money and use their position to doing something with which, as elected persons, they have nothing to do. It is a bargain between a number of equally unscrupulous parsons and councillors.

I am quite sure that if an Education Committee in any part of the country avowed its intention to see that as many children as possible became attached to a Secular Sunday School, there would be an immediate demand for the resignation of the members. Why is it that the same degree of honesty is not expected from men working in the interests of religion that is demanded when they are engaged in a non-religious enterprise? Complete honesty and devotion to the Christian religion seem to be getting more and more incompatible. Some Member of Parliament might well ask a question on the subject. The substance of the official reply would be interesting. Meanwhile we should like to hear from our Blackpool friends what local feeling there is on the matter.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## The Racket of Religion

"The divine stands up wrapt in his cloud of mysteries, and the amused laity must pay tithes and veneration to be kept in security, grounding their hope of future knowledge on a competent stock of present ignorance."

George Farquhar.

RELIGION is the oldest and most profitable of all the financial rackets. Priests have made countless billions of money—such enormous sums as would make an ordinary business man's head swim—from exploiting their fellow men and women. Their showmanship is superb, for, if you never raise the curtain, it does not matter if the other side is empty or not. Their stock-in-trade is sheer impudence and a fancy dress. With this simple outfit they have become the very princes of charlatans, beside whom other humbugs are but the merest amateurs. Priests have made and unmade kings, ruled countries, and exploited untold generations of men for thousands of years by bluff.

In the bad old days it was so easy for the priests. They were an educated caste and the populace was illiterate. If any opposition showed itself, the weak were bribed, and the strong murdered. And their methods were as unscrupulous as they were clever. Recall the game they played with the farmers. Priests claimed a "sacred tenth" on behalf of "god." Any deity answered their sorry purpose, and cats, cattle, serpents, crocodiles, birds, statues, even dolls were all used as required with the same pleasing results. And this game of put and take, in which the farmers did the giving, and the priests did the taking, lasted thousands of years, and totalled sums of money at which the imagination boggles. So far as this country alone is concerned, Christian priests had been at it for near

two thousand years, and their Pagan predecessors were skinning the poor farmers before them. Quite recently, this iniquitous tithe, which ought never to have been imposed at all, was commuted for £60,000,000, and the priestly banking account benefited accordingly. So, even in the hour of apparent defeat, the priests had a "rake-off" to the tune of millions of money.

Even the side-lines of this religious racket are worth attention. By pretending, with the help of an obsequious newspaper press, that St. Paul's Cathedral was in danger of falling into Ludgate Hill, the priests had another rake-off of tens of thousands of pounds from frightened believers. By pretending that the clergy were "starving," they got a cart-load of money. And to-day, with 40,000 places of worship and 50,000 priests in the country, they are raising the wind once more by appealing on behalf of "a recall to religion."

Religion in our day is not only a very flourishing trade, but a gigantic vested interest, which possesses untold wealth. It is precisely this financial factor which makes organized religion such a formidable enemy to all progress. For it places a premium upon superstition and ancient ignorance. The clergy themselves are not at all fools or idiots; they are perfectly willing to prostitute whatever intellects they possess for a comfortable job and a good social position. "Paris," said the renegade Henry of Navarre, "is well worth a mass." That is the attitude of the clergy. They sign the "Thirty-Nine Articles," or any other Confession of Faith, in order to secure a good salary with a house thrown in. The higher clergy have a remarkably good time. The Archbishops of Canterbury and York draw £15,000 and £10,000 respectively, enjoy palaces and town houses, and have seats in the House of Lords. Bishops draw salaries varying from £10,000 to £1,000, and other ecclesiastics have four-figure salaries. Many of them are pluralists, and hold several jobs, each with its corresponding salary. There are some very good "pickings" at the Universities and public schools, where excellent salaries are the rule rather than the exception.

This "jobbery" is increasing, rather than decreasing. Whereas a few years ago there were about fifty bishoprics, to-day there are three hundred, each with its appropriate salary. There are suffragan bishops, Colonial bishops, and other varieties. One is the Bishop of Northern and Central Europe, and he is in the happy position of being able to traverse his diocese in the tourist season in the most pleasant time of the year, hopping from holiday-resort to holiday-resort to visit small coteries of English residents. As the natives never heard of the right-reverend father-in-god, speak no English, and belong to rival religions, his spiritual title is more high-sounding than real, but the money is good.

Apart from the multiplication of comfortable jobs, the upshot of all this ecclesiastical trickery is really detrimental to the nation. Education is frustrated at every turn by hypocritical lip-service to ancient ignorance, both at the Universities and at the public schools. At the other end of the social scale the pupils at the elementary schools are taught to revere the Christian fetish-book and respect the clergy. In half of these schools definite sectarian teaching is imparted, the object being to train future members of the Church of England, rather than to impart education. "It is gross as a mountain, open, palpable!" The teachers in denominational schools are the worst paid and instructed in the whole teaching profession, and the schools themselves are badly equipped. And the true welfare of over two millions of children is retarded because priestly charlatans desire to manufacture believers in their ancient acadababra at the expense of



the State, which, in the final analysis, means at the expense of the citizens of this country, who may belong to any creed or no creed.

Indeed, this religious racket is a far worse burden than was the bootlegging racket in the United States. For bootlegging concerned only a part of the community, whilst this religious humbugger affects the entire nation. Millions of money are diverted annually for the furtherance of charlatany and the perpetuation of ignorance. Success breeds arrogance, and priests are no exception to the rule. They are ever seeking after temporal power, and woe betide any nation where they achieve it. The Romish clergy have made their name a byword throughout the world for political trickery, and the Protestant hierarchy are now playing the sedulous ape to their older rivals. Recall the recent backstairs activities of the Archbishop of Canterbury with regard to royalty, and the interference of the bishops in international matters. Remember the bishops' votes in the House of Lords, where they have opposed all progressive legislation as a mere matter of settled policy. Is not the price asked too high in order that priests should have their fingers in every pie, and should lead a very comfortable existence? Even to the ordinary citizen these priests try to act the grandmother. It is owing to their action that the weekly holiday is the dullest day of the week. It is owing to their action that restrictions are placed on the serving of refreshments, and the running of Sunday amusements and excursions. It is not due to concern for the working-man and his wife. It is simply that priests desire a monopoly in that day for their gospel-shops, and view with intense dislike any shilling that is spent elsewhere. What this sort of thing can lead to may be seen in Canada, where a man is liable to a fine if he tidies up his own garden on the "Lord's Day," or in Ireland, where Protestant newspapers and periodicals are only too-successfully "boycotted," and books, films, and plays are under clerical censorship of the narrowest type.

This religious racket must not be allowed to continue. We, whose fathers built up in generations of toil and suffering, the fair fabric of Democracy, can no longer tolerate the exploitation of an entire nation by consecrated charlatans, however picturesque. It is too much to ask that we should have our lives regulated by reference to a two-thousand years' old superstition, with its roots in the Bronze Age, in order that priests may fill their coffers with untold gold. The people of England are intelligent enough to work out their Secular salvation without the fears and trembling of an ancient faith. For humanity has outgrown the dogmas of old-world Eastern creeds, and civilized man is better than all the deities of decadent superstitions.

MIMNERMUS.

## The Ten Commandments

CHRISTIANS lay great stress upon the Ten Commandments. But for these, we are told, men would still be grovelling in darkness. The immature, preparing to undergo Confirmation, are primed as to their import in the Catechism, and, in many cases, without a doubt, ideas are put into their juvenile heads. At a very early stage of the all-important sacrament of Holy Communion, the Commandments are recapitulated—one of the Biblical sets, that is, for, although God wrote them with his own finger, there are three differing sets in the Holy Bible, viz: Exodus xx., Exodus xxxiv. and Deuteronomy v.

The second person of the Trinity comes in for all the bouquets nowadays; the tendency is to forget the

Old Gentleman. The Ten Commandments all the same must hang uncomfortably around Christian necks. On the highest ecclesiastical authority we are informed that Jesus was in at the birth of the Ten Commandments just as he was present at the Sermon on the Mount. For is not Jesus co-eternal with God, and there are not three eternal but one eternal? They are not only co-eternal; they are co-equal. We must hold this faith or without doubt perish everlastingly. So says our Archbishop of Canterbury; so says our Pope of Rome. So say our Presbyterian, Methodist and Baptist Churches. So say the Orthodox Greek Church. When these gentlemen speak of God, they speak of Jehovah. The Jehovah who walked about in the cool of the evening in the Garden of Eden, whom Moses saw in the cleft of the rock, and had numerous interviews with in a clump of fog at the summit of Sinai; once, on a highly important occasion, he saw him in the middle of a burning bush. It was Jehovah the first person of the Trinity, Jesus and the Dove, combined, who were carried about in a Box, made to the minute specification of God himself. This is the God of Christendom, the author of the Ten Commandments, whom the Churches speak of with reverence because they know that any other method of approach means death to all their pretensions.

God gave us the Ten Commandments. But it was quite a long while before he thought of them. Two thousand five hundred years before then he had made Man and Woman and fashioned them so that other little men and women could arrive without his help. They turned out however to be a bad lot. After one thousand six hundred years he drowned all of them (with the exception of a handful) in quite an unnecessarily spectacular way. All but the few just men could have had life painlessly extracted and another start made without the horror of universal drowning. As, according to Christian theory, the first bunch created had taken the wrong turning owing to their being endowed with free will, there was no greater chance of the second bunch, also endowed with free will, turning out any better. God simply put the issue to the throw of a coin. Noah celebrated the fact of his escape from drowning by getting drunk, and Ham immediately committed an apparently unpardonable breach of etiquette. The new assortment seemed hopeless from the start. It might have been a better idea if God had populated Eden in the first place with a couple of the calibre of Mark Twain and Olive Schreiner.

Anyway, at long last, came the Ten Commandments. Many of the provisions might have been laid down without divine help; one is confident of that. Adam, for instance, could hardly have missed his sandals, or Eve her powder-puff, without some attempt on their part to put a stop to such goings-on. But one must admit that some of the commandments sound divinely inspired. The prohibition of graven images could only have been inserted by a God and a jealous God at that. It is clear as well that the little digression about the sins of the fathers being visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation came from a God. One has heard of the conundrum: What is it that walks upon two legs, is covered with feathers and barks like a dog? The answer is a *pheasant*, and when one complains that a pheasant doesn't bark like a dog, one is informed that that bit was put in to make the riddle more difficult. God, in the commandments, puts in bits which make it arduous to reconcile All-Power and All-Goodness, but this is only done to make it more difficult and to give congenial employment to theologians who thrive on such dilemmas.

God was residing in his clump of fog at the summit of Sinai when he imparted guidance to Moses in the



business of living. Up and down the hill went this poor gentleman. On the fifth occasion he was kept waiting on the mat, in approved political style, for six days on end, which is only excusable when one recollects that those whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth. When the Lord at length finished his game of three-handed Bridge with Jesus and the Dove, he called Moses in and kept him there for forty days and nights. Neither bite nor sup entered Moses's mouth, for up to then the burnt-offering and bloody sacrifice business had not been put on a regular footing.

What God imparted unto Moses was by no means the Ten Commandments only. Equally authoritative surely are all the other things he said to him. One of God's instructions at the same time was that well-known injunction, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." *Thou shalt not commit adultery*, it should always be remembered, rests exactly upon the same authority and was given at the same place and time. *Remember Saturday to keep it Holy*, rests upon the same basis. Christians keep Sunday and pretend nowadays, that it is the spirit that matters. Nothing could be more hypocritical than this plea. God gave the recipe for a scent to be "holy unto Jehovah," and those who tried to imitate it had to be murdered. Nothing could be more precise than the instructions laid down regarding the burnt offerings and bloody sacrifices which he required. How to wring the neck and where to sprinkle the blood, were written down in detail by the finger of God himself. It was the *letter* that mattered.

Meanwhile Aaron and the boys at the foot of the mountain were making a beautiful golden calf and proclaiming, "These be your Gods O Israel." God's wrath "waxed hot," but Moses cajoled him into allowing him (Moses) to attend to the matter of discipline himself. But unfortunately in his own righteous wrath he threw down the stones and broke them. Forty days penmanship of the Ancient of Days, written in the fog, was thus wasted. Jehovah, for some surprising reason, took it very well, as far as Moses was concerned. But God "whose name is jealous," took it out of the Aaron squad. He commanded the sons of Levi to "consecrate yourselves this day to Yahweh, that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day," and to take their swords and "slay every man his brother, his companion, and his neighbour." This is an example of the proverb: One man may steal a sheep whilst another may not look over a fence. The introduction of the Ten Commandments was celebrated right royally, and, one must say, characteristically.

Most of the Commandments were laconic: but not so when God came to deal with burnt offerings. Particularly explicit was he about his future place of residence, a wooden box.

Jehovah was tired of living in foggy damp atmospheres. Thereafter he resided in a handsome bin, the Ark of the Lord, the lid of which was called the Mercy Seat. A neat little table was put in it and refreshment was always obtainable. It seems to an uninitiated person that the Aaronites would have won the competition had it not been for this compromise. Henceforth the Great I Am, Jehovah, Elohim, Jesus, and the Dove—the God of Christendom—was carried about by God's chosen people. They had something to see now for their prayers and offerings and sacrifices. God in a Box led them into battle, and in this guise helped them to mop up the Midianites, the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, etc., etc. By his gift for compromise Jehovah manages to carry on and remain an object of reverence to Christians even unto this day.

## Bruno and Christianity

GIORDANO BRUNO's relation to Christianity was complex. Direct atheism was impossible for him, for he too richly intuited the onward surge of contemporary forces to cut himself wholly apart from the ideology of the productive classes of his day. That ideology was throughout religious, even though it cored elements that would inevitably corrode the religious concept. But Bruno did not tamely pick up the religious ideas of his period; he really rejected them entirely, went ahead and came out on the other side, into a region where no one had penetrated before him, the truly scientific attitude in its modern relations. Thinkers like Aristotle had, of course, a genuinely scientific attitude; but after the long aberration into abstractions (expression of the bewildered centuries of suppressed serf-society), the scientific concept had to be rediscovered on a higher level, it had to embrace a wider range of relations, a deeper sense of unity.

Bruno was the first man to move consciously into this new space.

But having arrived there, he was appalled by his loneliness, by the discords that his profound sense of unity had to encounter. There, in the infancy of modern science, he could not merge as he desired the opposites of his world, thought and act, individual adventure and social co-operation in production, as they manifested themselves around him. When the sense of unity cannot find its social satisfaction, it has no choice but to abstract itself. Therefore, Bruno had perforce to abstract his new conviction of unity, and to seek for contact with his age by attempts to define his "unity" as somehow coinciding with "God." The result was that while partially breaking up his unity-concept, he even more broke up "God." That was what they burnt him for.

He tried to define his new sense of freedom, necessity and potentiality, in terms of "God." It seemed the only way that he could get at grips with his world, find a fulcrum with which to effect his transformation of values. That was why, momentarily blinded by the intensity of his hope, his trust in human possibilities, he turned to the Catholic Church. He could not see that he was simply speaking a new language, that what seemed so sweetly reasonable to him, was the most hellishly destructive project for the Church.

He made a vague attempt to create a kind of religious syncretism; to heap together all that seemed inspiring and humane in the various creeds, to bind this mass together with the only proposition that he held to be truly valid (that a man should do as he wished to be done by), and to convert the Church by showing the "truths of reason" that underlay myth.

A man who had never owned anything in the world beyond his clothes, a few books, and a few coins gained from teaching and writing that enabled him to keep painfully alive, he altogether underrated the terrific greed of vested interests—though it was that kind of greed which he had symbolized as the Triumphant Beast. But it was the gathering contradictions of his thought that really drove him to the fateful experiment of accepting Mocenigo's invitation and setting out to reconcile himself with the Mother Church. In his great Latin poems he had carried his thought as far as he could carry it. It was a question of life or death for him as a thinker thereafter; he could not bear to go on repeating himself. His utterances show that he set out for Italy with full consciousness of the tragic possibilities.

He had already prophesised his own fate:—

A citizen and servant of the world, son of Father Sun and Mother Earth; because he loves the world too much, he must be hated, cursed, persecuted, and



rejected by it. Meanwhile let him not be idle or ill-occupied while awaiting death, transmigration, change.

That I shall sink in death I know must be,  
But with that death of mine what life will vie?

He declared that for him "the procession of 50 or 100 torches in broad daylight would not be lacking in a Roman Catholic country." And as he left Frankfurt he wrote, "The wise man does not fear death; nay, there are even times when he sets forth to meet it bravely." He had also declared, "I have fought. That is much. Victory is in the hands of Fate. Be that as it may with me, this at least future ages will not deny of me, be the victor who may—that I did not fear to die, yielded to none of my fellows in constancy, and preferred a spirited death to a cowardly life."

This is not to say that he had planned any martyrdom. He was probably quite hopeful at the same time that he would manage to get along with the Pope as he had managed in so many tight corners before. Nevertheless he was keyed up to the martyrdom that awaited him; it was really that he went to meet. For it was the only logical outcome of the degree to which he had grown beyond his age, and the discords that he had brought into operation by so doing. In his death he found the affirmation, the entire denial of the destroyer, the Triumphant Beast, that he had been unable to find in his mental formulation.

And he felt that he had done so. His last words show the pride that had come to him.

It has been said that "the almost constant ambiguity of his over-deliberately eclectic attitude" was what made his metaphysics seem so filled with atheism.<sup>1</sup> There is truth in the remark; for, as we have seen, Bruno could not express a fully materialist outlook because of the bafflement of his sense of unity. Still, it is true that the deepest element in his thought is the rejection of Christianity in both its intellectual and its ethical formulations.

If we consider the matter shallowly, it might seem that the rebel Bruno would feel more sympathy for the Protestant sects than for the Catholics. But this is wrong. Apart from the ties that Bruno felt for a church in which he had been reared from earliest years, he was intensely repelled by Protestantism in that it expressed a disintegrative individualism, a morality based in commercial greed. (At the same time he hated the Catholic Church because it expressed the corporative greed of the priesthood; but the aura of unity that had grown from the fact that the Church's greed was corporative, and not individualist, attracted him when it came to a matter of choice.) He never tired of attacking the egomania of the sectarians:—

The enemy sects that one meets on earth present the same spectacle: on every side, the members of one sect give themselves the names of "sons of god," and "the just"; from one end to the other, one discharges at the most distinguished and honoured leaders of the opposed party the names of "hardened sinners" and "reprobates."

Doing good and abstaining from evil does not render them acceptable to God, but only hoping and believing according to their catechism.

Among ten kinds of such teachers there is not to be found one who has not formed to himself a Catechism ready to be published to the world, if not published already, approving no other institution but his own, finding in all others something to be disapproved, or doubted of; besides that the greater part of them disagree with themselves, blotting out to-day what they had written yesterday.

These passages are from the *Expulsion*, written in

England, when it was all to his advantage to flatter the Protestants. The only form in which he showed any sympathy for the Protestant sects was in admiration for Luther as a forceful character. Thus he burst out in his Valedictory Oration at Wittenberg, revealing to the full his hatred and contempt for the greed-lusts of the Catholic Church:—

But whom have we passed by? The mighty hero who resisted the voracious monster, half-fox half-lion, that vicar of the princes of Hell, who polluted the world by craft and force and cajoled men into superstitious and uncouth worship under the disguise of divine knowledge and the simplicity which is acceptable to God.

Whence comes he? From Germany, from the banks of the Elbe.

Out of the darkness of Orcus your Hercules dragged forth the Monster with the Triple Crown, bursting open the steely gates of Hell, triumphing over the city guarded by triple walls and the ninefold stream of Styx. Thou hast seen the light, O Luther. Thou hast regarded it. Thou hast heard the awakening spirit of the Lord and hast obeyed it. Thou hast confronted and overcome the Adversary girt about with power, and thou hast despoiled him.

This apostrophe was made on German soil; but Bruno had shown, by his behaviour in Geneva and London, that he would not truckle to dissenting sects for any mercenary motive. We have here a genuine expression of admiration for Luther's historical achievement, not for his ideas.

The oration with this passage was printed in 1588. Bruno must have known that it would be read by the Roman authorities when he returned to Italy. That it was evident to anyone that he was going to his death is shown by comments in the letters of one Havekenthal of Brandenburg, who was studying at Bologna in 1592, and who wrote thus to another German, studying at Padua:—

It is said that Giordano Bruno, the Nolan, whom you knew at Wittenburg, is living among you at Padua. Can this be so? What manner of man is this, an exile, as he used to admit, to dare to re-enter Italy? I marvel, I marvel, nor can I believe it, although I have it from a sure source. Tell me is this news false or true? (21 January).

I marvel no more concerning that sophist, for, every day, all sorts of incredible stories are reported here. (3 March).

Bruno's sense of unity made him feel the sectarian confusion and commercial greeds of the Protestants to be entirely destructive. Yet it was the new energy liberated by the productive advance of Capitalism on which Bruno himself was feeding. Here was the contradiction he could not overcome. Equal and opposite to his emotion of joy in the liberated energies was his need to formulate and touch unity. But though he returned to the Church because of his disgust for a world where he could find no principle of justice and harmony, yet he returned as the mouthpiece of the new forces that were the Church's bitterest foe. Whereas Luther merely wanted to throw off the yoke of dogma in so far as it hampered the national petty-bourgeois, and, having achieved that measure of freedom, wanted to create a fresh yoke of irrationality to prevent any inroads on the rights of property (which he proclaimed as the sole barrier against barbarism), Bruno wanted to sift religion throughout with rationality, a scientific attitude to the world, and a morality of social action. Therefore, though he might lack a mass-basis at the moment, he represented the real Anti-christ.

JACK LINDSAY.

(To be continued)

<sup>1</sup> *La Pensée Italienne du XVIe siècle*, R. Charbonnel.



## Acid Drops

The insensitiveness of those responsible for the creation and execution of our criminal laws is almost beyond belief. A child of nine years of age was ordered to be birched by the South Shields authorities. But after the birching a complaint was made to Councillor Gompertz by the boy's mother. Mr. Gompertz took the boy to a doctor, with the result that an official inquiry was instituted, and it was found that in whipping the boy the end of the birch had curled round the boy's abdomen and had left weals. So greater care is to be taken in future that all the lashes fall upon the back. But only an error of judgment had been committed—"There was no undue severity."

All we can say on the matter is that if the brutes responsible for a law which legalizes the use of the birch on a child of nine, and the brutes who inflicted the whipping, and the brutes who decided that no undue severity was exercised had all been compelled to have a birching on their own hides, they might form a different idea as to the quality of the punishment. We think of nothing more revoltingly brutal than a number of adults deciding on birching a child in a criminal prison in the name of the law. In future a leather shield is to be worn to protect the front part of the body. Could Christian kindness go further?

No one has yet written a life of Queen Mary's favourite cat, and a monograph on George VI.'s taste in neckties is not yet issued. The spate of books on the Royal family continues, and even the *Times Literary Supplement* is moved to write of one author's description of George VI. as "the lineal heir of his predecessors—Stuart, Tudor, Plantagenet, Norman, Saxon, and Scot—as carrying a laudable sentiment of loyalty too far." But as at the Coronation service he will be endowed with the power and prestige of the deity, Norman William, Scotch James, Dutch William and German George hardly seem worth mentioning.

One of the religious critics of Mr. Noel Coward's autobiography finds it "amusing and often depressing. It reveals a man who never seems to have been outside the green room and is apparently entirely uninterested in the social and political problems of his times, in religion, in art, and in anything that matters." What this critic really means, perhaps, is that Mr. Coward hardly ever mentions religion, as such, in his book. It seems that whatever he may privately believe, he has nothing but indifference to it in public. How much greater Mr. Coward would have been had he only signified his assent to religion and all that it implies—miracles, God, the Saviour, the holiness of bishops and the sacredness of churches. But indifference—that is almost as big a crime as rank unbelief! At least, we hope so.

Property of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners is involved in an L.C.C. clearance order under which sixty houses in Maxwell Terrace, Lambeth, must be vacated at the end of this month. A no-rent strike is protesting against "the terrible conditions we have to live in, and the way in which we are being treated." Some of the tenants do not know where to go. . . . Now is the opportunity of their neighbour, the Archbishop, to form a group in his "Back to religion" forces. Alternatively, the tenants might serenade him at the palace with that well-known hymn:—

We are but strangers here,  
Heaven is our home;  
Church landlords make that clear,—  
Heaven—or else roam.

"General" Evangeline Booth seems bent on enlivening the drab "Blood-and-Fire" brigade with a little more colour. On her welcome home from her recent tour of the East, she appeared in Eastern costume, over which was an orange and red robe; and was followed by a retinue

similarly costumed. A really *historical* touch was added to the pageant by Salvationist cadets playing upon horns and tom-toms!

The Church Teachers' Fellowship held a meeting in London, the other day, to see what could be done to bring religion into the Australian system of education. As Bishop Crotty said, this system "excellent in itself, was entirely secular"—and it was their duty to make it religious. According to these interfering nobodies and busybodies, there was "a cultural hunger" in the people of the Colonies, and that could only be satisfied by the Church. They were all quite sure that the Dominions could never be held together "by mere economic and material bonds."

To remedy this, the Church Teachers' Fellowship was endeavouring to send out "cultured men and women inspired with a desire to take with them that atmosphere of Christian influence to which England owes so much"—and no doubt quite a number of the people at the meeting believed this kind of nonsense. The truth is, of course, that the Church is faced with heavy losses in Australia unless it can capture the young in time. But it is doubtful whether the Australian Government will ever change its system of secular education admitted even by Bishop Crotty to be "excellent in itself." What a pity such an ideal still has to be fought for in our own schools.

The "repopulators" are getting busy again. Direful results will happen to old England unless people will stop thinking so much about having a good time with motor-cars, hiking, long week-ends, etc., and commence having large families. Woman, as such, is not consulted, of course. It would be awful to think she might want to say a word on the matter. In the meantime, celibate economists, priests, bishops, journalists and, in particular, Catholic women doctors who are also spinsters, are predicting the end of the British Empire if people refuse to have less than six (or is it ten?) per family. It is amusing to note that they also want "family endowment" if possible from the Government; in the old days it was taken for granted that the Good Lord always fed the mouths as they came. In these hard times a little help from the Government is worth tons from the Lord.

The "approach" to religion, thinks a religious writer, should not be by way of miracles. This is a "profound mistake." The right way is "to begin with the Person of Christ." But unfortunately if the "Person of Christ" really existed, he must have been a miracle himself. He must have been a God—and surely Deity is the biggest of all miracles? Grant a God—and it is quite easy (and logical) to swallow all the other miracles, including the Resurrection, the famous Easter miracle without belief in which one can't be a Christian. As the aforesaid writer admits: "The whole credibility of the supernatural deeds ascribed to him, and, above all, of his own Resurrection, must depend on who he is." We agree, but if he is not and never was, what then? Paul hit the nail on the head when he said the answer was—exit Christianity.

The Pointe-aux-Trembles Church, one of the oldest churches in Canada, erected by the Gentlemen of St. Sulpice in 1705 has been totally destroyed by fire. The Insurance Companies we learn will recompense the Church authorities for this Act of God. The conflagration accounted as well for historic plaques and old paintings. What is more important, it burned up the *Holy Sacrament* in the tabernacle, which the secular authorities prevented the faithful from attempting to rescue. The actual body of Christ therefore came in for a bad quarter of an hour. Sergeant Delorme was slightly burned on the right thumb. Reports as to what part of the body of Christ has been affected by the fire will, we presume, be coming in later.

Pomp and circumstance surrounded the ceremony of the *blessing* of the foundation-stone of this Church laid in 1705. Present were all the great ecclesiastics, and those



whom great ecclesiastics consider great. The inscription (in French) on the stone ran :—

To the Very Good and Very Great God, 10th June, 1705, Clement XI. being the Pope sitting in the Chair of St. Peter, Louis XIV. reigning; under the episcopacy of the illustrious and very reverend Father in God, Jean-Baptiste of the Cross, Bishop of Quebec . . . this first stone is solemnly blessed; happy commencement of the parish church dedicated to the very Holy Infant Jesus and put in position in the foundations by or to the name of M. the Marquis de Vandrenil.

A very happy commencement indeed if a conglomeration of the dignitaries of Church and State conduces to happiness. It certainly makes the *finish* the more impressive.

What impression was made on God can only be judged by the turn of events. Prior to this final debacle, in 1684, by aid of a huge wind he tore down the steeple, dragging down the old bell which had also been substantially blessed when installed in the first chapel in 1684. It was broken to smithereens. And now the fire! God doeth all things well. Ecclesiastical mutterings over bells and stones make the wrath of the Deity to "wax hot."

A special Coronation Prayer Book is to be issued by the Oxford Press. It will contain the whole of the Abbey service, will be bound in bright red and blue, and will bear the Royal Monogram. Freethinkers who wish to obtain this are advised to make early application. They will help to minimize the loss incurred on the edition which calls for prayers for Edward VIII., a loss which that monarch could easily have obviated by delaying his abdication a little longer.

The Rev. Herbert Pegg, vicar of Old Coulsdon reports good business. "Since last June," says he, "There have been only three Sundays on which I have not had to conduct christenings. Babies are coming here in swarms." Two new factories are being contemplated in Old Coulsdon; one for perambulators, the other for feeding-bottles.

The Rev. B. P. T. Jenkins, vicar of St. Mary's, Sanderstead, reports bad business. He says: "I do not know why young people will not get married at St. Mary's. During the last two or three months we have read banns for seven or eight couples, but they have only come here to get a certificate to get married somewhere else." The match factory in Sanderstead looks like closing down.

A weighty problem is exercising the minds of the congregation of a small village chapel, according to the *News-Chronicle*. They employ a woman to clean up and light the fire for Sunday services. During the week she is employed by several local people by the hour. Who is responsible for her Health Insurance Stamp? It appears that the onus lies on the first employer of the week. This is unfortunate but if the chapel were to have their services on the seventh day of the week instead of the first, thus, incidentally, getting into line with Jehovah's wishes, a few weekly coppers could thus be saved.

We read that in 1928 a missionary, accompanied by his son, climbed to the summit of Kilimanjaro, and in a cave on the ice-wall of Africa's highest mountain placed a copy of the Bible. This is a capital idea which we hope will be widely followed. It can do little harm at 19,320 feet above sea level.

A diamond cluster has been found in Lancashire stuck in a wad of chewing gum. We have heard of still stranger finds being made in pieces of bread and glasses of Communion Port.

That all superstitions cling together has long been obvious to the non-superstitious. We are by no means surprised to read in the *Listener* that the Rev. Broadcaster Father D'Arcy, S.J., said over the Radio, "I am

not prepared to dismiss all interest in Astrology as nonsense." How could he? Does he not preach as a fact that a star "stood over the stable" where Christ was being born? As to Spiritualism, Father D'Arcy does not deny its claims on grounds of fact. He only thinks it "is seldom wholesome."

The Rev. James Stewart, B.D., asks—rhetorically, of course, he is "telling" us really—"How do I know that Life has a meaning and God a purpose?" If he could actually tell us of genuine proofs of so queer a theory we should be interested. But all the information he gives is to assert his belief in Christ's resurrection—and—the sun-stroke of St. Paul :—

Paul meeting Jesus outside the gates of Damascus, fell blinded to the earth! What had he seen? Do not think it was the Syrian sunshine that dazzled him. No! He had seen—for one tremendous moment, in that risen, death-defeating Christ, he had seen—the unveiled purpose of God.

Now we know how Mr. Stewart "knows" anything. It is like anyone learning about Jack the Giant-killer by hearing that somebody centuries ago had hay fever.

Another "Converted Atheist"! But this time the—shall we say, *STORY*—appears not in the editorial columns of the religious weeklies, but in their advertisement columns. The Rev. William Dick, in a begging announcement, imagines that the pious public will send contributions more readily if they imagine that real live Atheists are going to get converted thereby. Mr. Dick's advertisement quotes an anonymous Atheist of no address, who owes his "conversion" to the good Dick. He sends the following unsolicited testimonial :—

I cannot find words to say what I feel. I have been an Atheist for many years, but I have changed this week; I am going back to Poplar and to Trinity—and I am going to stand by Mr. Dick. I have learned this week that one can live in a Christian home, and be happy.

This unusual experience apparently accounts for our anonymous Atheist's conversion to Mr. Dick's Mission work.

The *Methodist Recorder* gives space to a protest by the Rev. Walter Spencer against the monstrous offer of the Surrey Education Committee to present a free gift of £12,000 to build a Church School in a single school area if the Church contributes an additional £4,000. We wish the Methodists were sincerely opposed to the ratepayers and citizens being fined to support religious propaganda. We are afraid the Dissenters mainly desire a share in the spoils, not that the robbery should cease.

A Mr. W. M. Mann asks the editor of an evening paper, "Why it is that the Salvation Army is allowed a 'Sell Denial week' " with "a box at almost every restaurant and cinema," while a "charity" which never charges for a bed has no such advantage. . . . We would like to know why other commercial corporations do not insist that they also should be on equal terms, and have a beggars' licence to increase their capital and reserves, or to save them from bankruptcy. It is grossly unfair that while ordinary company-mongers may indulge in mendacity, the Salvation Army company should be permitted to indulge openly in mendacity and mendacity.

With due diffidence towards its religious "fans" a Bouverie Street organ thinks that the Blackpool Education Committee made "an unwise move" in calling upon children and teachers to break up their school course in order to boost religion. "The clergy of Blackpool might do better to encourage the children to go to Sunday School . . . whose revival might well become part of the 'Recall to Religion' campaign" is the suggestion of the Bouverie scribe, who ignores that this was the very purpose of the scheme. Unable to attract the children to Sunday School, the "clergy of Blackpool," and of most other parts seek to coerce them, but, happily, the children's cry resounding through the land to-day is "I don't wan' to go to Sun' School, mummy!"



# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

S. MASON.—We may consider the question of issuing a cheap edition of *The Rights of Man* later in the year. We have our hands full at the moment.

O. MORGNER (Tenn., U.S.A.).—No Roman Catholic is permitted to read books that have been placed on the *Index*, without obtaining special permission. With regard to reading heretical books generally, any Roman Catholic who confessed to doing so would certainly be pulled up by his "spiritual guides." The practice of "Confession" would operate here.

D. W. ALLEN.—Thanks for paper. You will see we have made use of it.

C.L.—Nothing more is necessary in order to withdraw your child from religious instruction than to write a note to the head-teacher requesting that it be done. The teacher has no power of refusal. If any obstacle is placed in the way of the withdrawal, please let us know.

H.G.B.—Thanks for address of likely new reader; paper will be sent for four weeks.

FOR Advertising and Distributing the *Freethinker*—D. Fisher, 4s.

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

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One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9. All cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to "The Pioneer Press," and crossed "Midland Bank, Ltd., Clerkenwell Branch."

## Sugar Plums

As announced last week the Annual Conference of the N.S.S. will, this year, be in Liverpool. It is to be hoped that Branches will see that they are well represented, and that there will also be a good muster of individual members. The Agenda will appear in our next issue, and some of the resolutions may be of consequence to the future of the Society. Delegates and members attending on Whit-Sunday and requiring hotel accommodation should communicate their requirements to the General Secretary as early as possible. The booking of hotel accommodation does not include the Conference Luncheon, and all those desiring tickets for the luncheon should also notify the General Secretary.

Professor Gordon Child recently said, to an American audience, that Sir James Jeans and Professor Eddington were preaching a disguised supernaturalism in the name of science. Sir James Jeans retorted that British scientists lead the world, which has nothing to do with the case. It is not what position the bulk of British scientists hold in the world, but what a few British scientists say with regard to the bearings of science on religion. And in this matter British scientists certainly do not lead the world. Their religion, as a matter of fact, has nothing whatever to do with their science. Sir James is eminent as an astronomer but his philosophy of religion is about as far away from science as it possibly

can be. Sir James has been doing what is very common in this country—using a reputation made in one department to support positions in another department on which he is no greater authority than the freshest of sucking curates.

In doing this Sir James is helped by two things. First, the man in the street, who understands little of religion and less of science, who is willing to accept the statement that science yields support to religious belief; and second, the man in the pulpit who is ready to support anything that gives support to his religion. Those who are under the illusion that Sir James's support of religion is anything but downright nonsense, we advise to read Mr. Cohen's reduction of his statement that science yields a basis for religion to a new Athanasian Creed. It will be found on pp. 122-3 of *God and the Universe*, and is no more than an arrangement of Sir James's own statements in logical order. Nothing more intrinsically absurd than these statements has appeared in any scientific work of recent times.

On Saturday, April 17, the West Ham Branch N.S.S. will hold one of its popular Socials in the Earlham Hall, Earlham Grove, Forest Gate, London, E. A programme of songs, dances, games, etc., has been arranged and all Freethinkers and their friends within range are invited. Admission is free, and will those intending to be present arrive in time to begin the enjoyment at 7 p.m. Forest Gate is the same as in other parts of London and 7 p.m. is at 7 p.m.

We are indebted to the *Daily Worker* for the following:—

We have often laughed in these pages at the German efforts to develop the theory of a blue-eyed Aryan Christ. No doubt we shall often have occasion to do so again.

But it takes a certain sort of Englishman (in this case a writer in the *National Review*) to say anything so wonderful as:—

Mr. Rhodes was full of admiration for and devotion to our Saviour, whose divinity he said it was not necessary to prove—the life was enough—a perfect example for all time of what you would call a great English gentleman.

There is really nothing more absurd about this than there is about much of the talk that goes on in the religious world concerning Jesus Christ, and in these days it goes well enough with the orgy of superstition that will take place at the coronation, and which the Archbishop of Canterbury hopes will lead to a revival of religion. And one Christian sect used to trace back Queen Victoria to David.

From the *Daily Express* of April 6, we see that a Miss Blackie, divisional organizer for the National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children, says that "at a certain school, the name of which she declined to disclose," pupils were taught "to walk and wipe their feet on a mat placed in the centre of the room, on which were the words 'We wipe our feet on Christ.'" It is a pity that Miss Blackie cannot bring herself to giving the name and the location of the school. Somehow there comes into our head a story of the late Phil May's. "I say," said one coster to another, "did you tell Bill I was a liar?" "Naow," was the reply, "I fort he knew it." We wonder whether Miss Blackie ever reflected on the significance in a Christian country, with a semi-deified God at its head, of the existence of a Society to prevent children being brutally treated by Christian parents. We expect not.

There is, according to the *Northampton Independent*, a curious story connected with St. Crispin's Church, Northampton. The paper states that the Church owes its being to the Bradlaugh struggle. When Bradlaugh put up for a constituency in Northampton, many people were so incensed that a number of monied men built the Church as a kind of gesture to God, that they did not agree with Bradlaugh going to Parliament. And now the Church has been turned into a Shoe Union office, and the officials go their way apparently unconcerned whether God is offended or not. Perhaps they think God has forgotten all about it.



## Gibbon and Christianity

### II.

THE notes appended by Milman and Guizot to chapters XV. and XVI. of their edition of the *Decline and Fall*, show how bitterly they resented Gibbon's way of dealing with the "facts" upon which Christians claim their religion as being of divine origin; and whenever they can, they love to emphasize any remark Gibbon makes in favour of the character or morals of the early Christians. It is extraordinary how these two able men were unable to see that the goodness or kindness, the austerity or beneficence, of the first converts to Christianity did not prove, and could not prove that their new religion was a special revelation from God. There is no need to deny that these people were, as Gibbon admits, quite good men and women. "Their serious and sequestered life," he says of some of them, "averse to the gay luxury of the age, inured them to chastity, temperance, economy, and all the sober and domestic virtues. . . . The contempt of the world exercised them in the habits of humility, meekness, and patience. The more they were persecuted, the more they adhered to each other. Their mutual chastity and unsuspecting confidence has been remarked by infidels, and was too often abused by perfidious friends." And Milman is so delighted that he confirms this by adding to Gibbon's authority—Pliny—the note, "and this blamelessness was fully admitted by the candid and enlightened Roman." Christianity, however, does not rest on the "blamelessness" and other characteristics of the early Christians. It rests on *miracles*, on a revelation from God, on God himself in the shape of his "blessed Son," and so on; and, needless to say, Gibbon's treatment of miracles was hated by his opponents. He was a historian, coldly analytical, weighing evidence in the light of reason; and in the ultimate, he saw nothing in the accounts of miraculous happenings but sheer credulity. He said:—

The primitive Christians perpetually trod on mystic ground, and their minds were exercised by the habit of believing the most extraordinary events. They felt, or they fancied, that on every side they were incessantly assaulted by demons, comforted by visions, instructed by prophecy, and surprisingly delivered from danger, sickness and from death itself, by the supplication of the church. The real or imaginary prodigies, of which they so frequently conceived themselves to be the objects, the instruments, or spectators, very happily disposed them to adopt with the same ease, but with far greater justice, the authentic wonders of the evangelistic history; and thus miracles that exceeded not the measure of their own experience, inspired them with the most lively assurance of mysteries which were acknowledged to surpass the limits of their understanding. It is this deep impression of supernatural truths which has been so much celebrated under the name of faith.

Writing like this infuriated believing Christians; for they rightly saw how Gibbon was laughing at them. Milman considered the section from which the above was extracted "the most uncandid paragraphs in Gibbon's History." But they are mild in comparison with some others which are passed over in silence by both Milman and Guizot. As for example:—

The Christian, who founded his belief much less on the fallacious arguments of reason than on the authority of tradition and the interpretation of scripture, expected it [the end of the world] with terror and confidence as a certain and approaching event; and as his mind was perpetually filled with the solemn idea, he considered every disaster that happened to the [Roman] empire as an infallible symptom of an expiring world.

One could go on quoting similar passages, but I would rather the reader went to Gibbon for himself; I can fancy nothing will add more to his pleasure than the brilliant and scathing irony of the great historian.

Needless to say, replies by orthodox Christians were soon multiplied. They were not going to take these insidious attacks lying down; and, in the usual Christian fashion, Gibbon was scurrilously attacked by a number of pious but venomous writers, whose works and names, by this time, have almost been forgotten. One writer, however, distinguished himself by a more moderate tone. This was Richard Watson, the Bishop of Llandaff, and his *Apology for Christianity* has survived partly because of this, and partly because it was, perhaps, the most able of all the replies to Gibbon. When I say survived, I do not mean it is readily accessible. It is, indeed, rarely to be met with on second-hand bookstalls—a fate which seems to overtake most replies to "infidels." Watson, twenty years later, replied to Paine with his *Apology for the Bible*; but how many of the millions of readers of the *Age of Reason* have ever read this reply or even seen a copy?

In a short memoir of Watson, the Rev. J. S. Memes deals with the way in which the *Apology* was written. Mr. Memes does not like Gibbon; this is how he describes the celebrated two chapters with which I have been dealing:—

They contain a covert attack on the Christian faith. . . . Gibbon was the first in this country who ventured, in a systematic argument, to assail its truth. He does so insidiously. Pretending to admit the *supremacy* of a heavenly power, he so manages his statements, that the unwary reader finds himself insensibly conducted to the conclusion that the necessary operation of five *secondary* causes, assumed by the historian, are sufficient to account for the speedy propagation, and final reception of Christianity, as the established worship of the Roman Empire.

Mr. Memes, in giving a description of the work of Watson, is very proud of its "tone"—as against that of some of the other opponents of Gibbon. And Gibbon himself, it may be remarked, treated Watson with every mark of courtesy, in thanking him for a copy of the *Apology*. "If any call of pleasure or business," wrote Gibbon to Watson, "should call Dr. Watson to town, Mr. Gibbon would think himself fortunate in being permitted to solicit the honour of his acquaintance." But it was easy to see that the historian thought precious little of the reply to his book. It is long-winded and, in truth, boring. Watson takes too long to come to his point. But he is by no means an earnest champion of all the superstitious beliefs of the early Christians. In fact, he seems to me to be mostly apologizing for a lot of the early Christian convictions.

Of course, he was obliged to admit the miracles—"Nothing but the recent, prevailing evidence of real, unquestioned apostolic miracles," he cried, "could have secured the infant Church from being destroyed by those which were falsely ascribed to it." And he seemed to think all that was necessary was to send Gibbon to "Campbell on Miracles" for finally clinching the matter. Watson, like Milman and Guizot, tried to avoid the terrible irony with which Gibbon attacked their beliefs. He did his best to answer seriously—but it was a poor answer. What was the good of telling us what Paul said, or Matthew, when the whole point is to prove that what they said is true? And Watson found it very difficult to deal with the irony in the world-famous passage beginning with: "How shall we excuse the supine inattention of the Pagan and philosophic world to those evidences, which were presented by the hand of Omnipotence, not to their reason, but to their senses?" "It may be,"



sadly declared Watson, "that not one of the few heathen writers, whose books have escaped the ravages of time, was ever present when a miracle was wrought." The unconscious humour of this response must have tickled Gibbon enormously.

Where are the opponents of Gibbon these days? His work lives, not merely as the history of the Roman Empire, but as one of the cleverest and most sustained attacks on Christianity ever penned. It is unanswerable and Gibbon must have known it was unanswerable. Certainly Newman must have thought so, for he considered Gibbon the greatest, and I cannot recollect if he ever tried to answer the utter unbelief with which the *Decline and Fall* is packed.

Two hundred years ago were born Gibbon and Paine, as dissimilar as it is possible for men to be. And for us Freethinkers perhaps their greatest quality is their unbelief. It is good to put on record that their names and reputation have never stood higher than now. Their greatness is unquestioned, having survived all the obloquy, the mud-slinging, and the criticism of opponents. In them, Freethought has triumphed.

H. CUTNER.

### Is God a Snob?

A ROMAN Catholic priest has been telling the world that God is not an "intellectual snob." The trouble is that we have too many of his self-appointed representatives telling us what God *is not*. It is of more interest and importance to let us know definitely *what he is*. God is unhappy in many of his ambassadors on earth! They do not give him a fair show. It is rather awful to think that, at this advanced point in time, the Almighty has to be defended against charges of snobishness! Assuming that these are unfounded, we are still at a loss to understand where God stands amongst the intellectuals. The men we have met or read about, who are entitled to be described as great intellectuals, certainly never betray any signs of snobishness, or arrogance, or swank or condescension. They have seen furthest into the heart of things by wide research and profound study and the majority of them find no reality in the Divine All-Highest, who is advertised by the orthodox churches as the Creator and Ruler of the Universe, and King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Grandiloquent language and etherealized sentimentality weigh not at all with the deepest thinkers. The chief supporters and proclaimers of God as the Father of all are interested priests and parsons; clerically-minded wealthy laymen who regard the Church as a bulwark against any great change which would encroach upon their "rights"; and impertinent brats of self-boasting journalists, who have found that siding with the faith as it is in Jesus pays them handsomely indeed.

An old writer asked, "Canst thou by searching find out God?" Such a question does not worry journalistic babes and sucklings who imagine that they have arrived at real truth by intuitive processes; by the inferences they draw from their own personal feelings about certain phenomena; by believing what they *wish* to believe or what it is their interest to believe. But there can be no doubt there is an extensive market for the outpourings of these young Shallows! The inhabitants of these islands still remain what Carlyle called them—"mostly fools"—they like to have their creeds and opinions ready-made for them, and to be

saved any serious intellectual exertion in forming opinions of their own. That is the solid wall of stupidity and mugwumpism that unsubsidized Freethought is up against; and to effect a breach in it makes Joshua's job at Jericho look like child's play. The Freethinker does not use blaring trumpets and banner-bearing brass bands with which to assail the citadel of ignorance, fear, stupidity, credulity and superstition.

But the great trouble is that it is manifestly impossible to draw a picture of God with which *all* Christians will agree. Each sect has its own conception of God—indeed has it not been said that every man makes his own God? It is futile therefore for bodies of Christians to profess to address God as if they were all agreed about his personality and attributes! The discoveries of impartial science are thrusting God further back out of the general consciousness. Even his sex is called in question. We do not know now whether God is he, she or it. But we may safely affirm that every conception of God, from the beginning of known history, is that of a very big human being—free of human limitations. There is really no difference in his attributes regarded as an early tribal God or as a later international God. But then, the clerics have ever been astute enough merely to generalize about God. They will not be pinned down to any definite and detailed description of his, her or its personality. But why assume that the God worshipped by Christians is the only true God? To any true lover of his kind this Christian God presents some distinctly undesirable and unattractive features. Indeed the sacred books of the Christians declare their God to be a jealous God; an avenging God; quick to take offence; consumed with anger against all who will not grovel at his feet. Such qualities are not unsuitable, one may believe, to a snob. They are to be recognized in the big bullying landlord and the big swaggering capitalist; and these types find snobishness quite congenial to their respective characters.

Anyway, what we don't know or can't know doesn't count—for anything. What we do know, and what we can know if we try perseveringly to find out counts alone—for everything. Supernatural or infranatural, or extranatural beings all remain hidden beyond the grasp of human knowledge. Yet clerics have the presumption to assure us that *some* such beings are real, actual, living persons—the greatest—their Christian God—being the repository of all Truth. And they have the further presumption to ask men of the highest intellectual achievements whose knowledge will not allow them to accept such "assurances" or to comply with such demands—to believe their statements as infallibly and irrefragably true and of vital concern to every human being!

In vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird! Too many of us have tested Divine claims by the events of human history, and these are, in the highest degree, discreditable to the character of any supreme being. The Church has never attempted to answer the challenge of Freethinkers on the subject of these events, because it knows very well that it cannot. It continues its "life" in the clouds; and these trivial, piffling arguments which its members raise amongst themselves are evidence of mental impoverishment and a definite feeling of insecurity. What next? Somebody will be raising the question whether God uses a handkerchief or a toothbrush; or whether he is in the habit of taking a bath!

IGNOTUS.

Lying is the accepted pastime of the press.

New York "Arbitrator."



## Young Tyrants or Young Allies?

THE cause of liberalism in religion is faced with many difficulties and with enormous opportunities nowadays, but unquestionably the most outstanding of these both is the unrivalled opportunity presented to it of making converts among the modern young. For the young afford a field which is as yet untilled by liberalism, although assiduously cultivated by orthodoxy. The factor which provides this opportunity is the failure of the attention given by the churches to youth to produce anything like an adequate harvest; in its turn this is due to the great part which most modern social developments have taken on behalf of religious liberalism. But it is as well to remember, lest we grow complacent and come to regard the spread of Free thought as inevitable, that though the natural weight of most such developments is generally progressive, they *may* be exploited for reactionary ends. It is important, therefore, that we realize this and seek to use them as allies for reason, ere their unprogressive possibilities are used for the destruction of liberty.

One important social development of recent years is the great change which has destroyed the hold of religion upon the young by emancipating them from parental tutelage at home, and substituted for it their incursion into communal life, in factory, workshop and office. More particularly, the emancipation of young women (a woman is often "the worse half" of a man in religious matters) has been important. Indeed it is something to be said for modern industrial civilization, that without its gathering release of youth from the stupefying atmosphere of severe parental authority, peasant proprietorship of bricks and mortar and the slave mentality thus engendered (which leads nearly inevitably to belief in the religion of slaves), there could have been nothing like the religious liberalism of modern youth.

For it is a salient factor of modern life that most modern young men and women are not adherents of any of the great historic religions. At home—in those short periods they are home—they may formally acquiesce in their parents' desire for the maintenance of some form of organized religious worship, but such as it is, it is nearly always resented and gone through in silent protest. Parents try by these means to procure some footing upon which they may work towards the re-establishment of their lost authority. But such tactics too are useless, and the two parties continue to exist in a state of silent war upon the religious question.

On the other hand, outside the home the young people of to-day find an entirely different morality from that taught them in childhood and upheld still at home. At home there is taboo and authoritarianism: at work a large measure of freedom of speech. Topics that are never mentioned at home, or referred to only by circumlocutions are commonly discussed in the wider working world. Old snobberies, distinctions, pet prejudices, traditional superstitions and narrow-mindednesses go down before the exigencies of competitive work, while this last new characteristic of intensified competition produces such a feverish search for innovation of every kind, that those thus engaged have no time for or patience with the restrictions made to suit other times. In the young the old mentality soon collapses under the onslaught of working life; with the young people especially the process is accelerated and the libertarian influences accentuated, for they have not the innate conservatism of the more elderly to resist the coercion of modern life.

Not much more, if anything, is needed to set the young into rebellion. Of course, it must be freely ad-

mitted that neither the semi-victorian "virtues," nor rebellious tendencies can be imputed to all family life in this country: enlightenment has spread, but more slowly than most of us like to admit. The writer found ample confirmation of the existence of modern Victorianism when he addressed a questionnaire to a considerable number of young men and women, asking them therein what freedom of discussion and thought and general liberty were allowed in their homes. The replies were very illuminating.

From that and subsequent other studies it emerged clearly that Victorian puritanism is a heavy blight in the homes of thousands of families of the lower middle-classes, who live in the dormitory suburbs of London and the other big cities of the British Isles. The majority of these people belong to Jung's peasant persona: that is, their lives are dominated by a peasant mentality; a craving for personal possessions, which takes the form of incessant collecting. They collect a house, a car, a wife and go on thus throughout their lives.

Chained to their possessions in the suburbs, they have to spend the best part of their lives going to and from "business"; by this servitude they are largely too busied and tired to have time for intelligent interests even if they wish them. To such, religion offers both a social life and an intellectual life, both of which have for them the double merits of easy accessibility and traditional respectability. And what is more important, Christian orthodoxy helps to strengthen in them the habits by which they maintain their positions in society: it keeps them in the straight and narrow way of puritan industry, humility, thrift and intellectual respectability. Religion of this economic kind which is so essential to them, they try by many means to impose upon their children, as being necessary to the children if they are to keep up the position to which their parents have accustomed them.

Youth naturally revolts from this heavy orthodoxy. Its revolt usually shows itself in contempt for its elders and their well meant narrow-mindedness, and because the parental hand is often heavy the revolt is often violent; Italy, Germany, Russia, Turkey and Japan (where youth is violently revolting) especially show, and every other country more or less shows, how violent, emotional and ill-led is the rebellion. Not that all youth movements are so irresponsible: some young people manage to maintain "the open mind," while others seek the most satisfying of the "left" sects, and find release in their saner orthodoxies, but the response of a good number of young men and women is despair. And little wonder too. The philosophy which earlier had made the world tolerable is gone for them—it is intellectually indefensible—yet there is no easily understood and commonly available alternative philosophy: the immensities of the differences dividing liberals intimidate them: the economic situation often is desperate: newly come from the emotionally well-equipped camp of reaction, they rebel with little thought of that to which they intend to adhere.

Bewildered thus, is it so very mysterious that they give way to hostility towards their elders, who have failed to equip them for life, and railing against their parental defaulters, are fair game for those unscrupulous demagogues of reaction, who, under the pretext of appealing to youth and giving it a place in the sun, really use youth for their own ends? Is it not understandable?

In many countries youth's generous idealism has thus fallen a victim to the unified forces of barbarism, which were cunning enough to cloak their jungle ideals in the dress of high motives, and who never hesitated, in direct contrast with their rationalist and liberal opponents (who were mainly on the defensive), to be militant and aggressive. For a good part, the



liberals and rationalists, using the terms, that is, in their wider senses, appealed to enlightened self-interest, and the reaction of their young audiences was to shun automatically such "materialism" in preference for the high-sounding endeavour morality (always attractive to youth) of the barbarians.

And so youth followed the big battalions of reaction. Youth found release in movements which posed themselves as the Deity's; and from serving "him," and thus partaking of something of that "person's" glory, could do any infamy in "his" name. And from it all there emerged the terrible fact that youth's idealism and youth's energy were harnessed to the newly-resurrected barbarism of other churches, the dogmatic, persecuting political churches, reinforced by their capture of the liberal state and religious ideals and instruments. In the knowledge of their additional capture of youth, and of how by its support they are aided and kept in power, the authoritarians, actual and potential, everywhere, do everything within their means to ensure that youth is theirs.

It seems to me that in the face of this menace a special effort by rationalists here is necessary if we are to save our youth—and consequently our liberty—from the fate meted out to them in many other European countries.

L. H. BORRILL.

### Some Points of Disagreement

I HAVE just received a long series of notes from a school-teacher, who is obviously unable to accommodate himself to the circumstances of my son being withdrawn from religious instruction; and although he has no legal right to bother me with his moral concerns, I thought that an interchange of remarks would prove profitable to him if not to me. Furthermore, as this teacher is illustrative of a type which seems to know nothing of the wealth of literature on theological controversy—despite his alleged scholarship—I plead justification for penning these notes.

It is not intended to insult readers of the *Freethinker* by re-iterating anti-theological and anti-biblical answers, but I think that some of the points raised by him might with profit have the limelight of publicity bestowed upon them.

First the teacher points out the necessity for accepting authority in matters of science, suggesting we cannot verify, at first hand, every finding of every science. We can only do this, he says, if we are primarily engaged in the first-hand work of the science concerned; hence the vast majority of us must accept our scientific facts second-hand, i.e., on authority. Few of us are capable, even if we had the time and inclination, of verifying many of the facts of science, such as the distance from us of the pole-star or the speed of light. Coupled with this, strangely enough, Darwin is cited as a fine example of scientific exactitude, "with few equals." It is pointed out, by my correspondent, how Darwin has left on record his care against bias and his careful testing of conclusions.

"Poverty makes strange bedfellows," and certain it is that poverty in controversial matters makes strange situations, for here is one—pointing to the necessity of accepting authority—eulogising the very authority who strangled his theological case. For right in that very department or science (biology) where all the prating about the "mystery" of life obtains, and where theology struggles for existence (glorying in our alleged ignorance), one of our great authorities, "with few equals," implies a rejection of "god." Indeed his findings were instantly recognized as atheistic by the religious world of his time.

Applying this acceptance of authority to Christianity, this dominion proceeds to argue, that just as we accept the truths of science on trust and by virtue of their working, so we should accept the teachings of the New Testament. These (good) teachings of Christ, he testifies, do, if

accepted, work. That is, the inward spiritual feeling obtained does uplift one and make one strive for the best in life. He has personally experienced this in all the departments of life he has entered, and during the two years in France, before he was wounded.

I have heard our Editor say, under a similar circumstance, that this plea could with certain adaptations be put forward by a whisky addict, but it would not deter us from trying to reform him. This is merely a personal testimony as to a mental experience, a "sensation." I have consequently asked this teacher: Has he ever experienced the "sensation" of a well-informed atheism? If he has not—and I am quite sure he hasn't—then he can pass no judgment on the relative values of the two "sensations," as such feelings are absolutely private to the individual. Over and against this it has been pointed out, that many, if not most, Freethinkers have experienced both sides of this "spiritual" medal, and that we are therefore the best qualified to bear testimony as to our improved mental state.

Leaving the private and individual aspect of these New Testament teachings, we ask the question—have they worked socially? This consideration will involve the question of how these teachings have been a dynamic of the human mind to social action. We may apply the maxim "by their fruits you shall know them." An ideal must be judged, if it is claimed to be dynamic, by the effect it has on the conduct of its devotees, and history provides ample data for judgment in this regard, a history which even Christians try to excuse.

Yet it is frequently supposed we have rejected theology without examination and test, when the truth is that it is because of this process we have rejected it. We are not as is so often assumed, without scriptural knowledge, but, individual for individual, possess more of it than our opponents. We are not "mystified" by any lack of scientific knowledge, but spurred on to achieve more. We will not glorify our ignorance with the label "god," but consider it as something about which we may be sad but not MAD.

JOHN V. SHORTT.

### Divine Guidance or Divine Devastation?

AUSTRALIA is experiencing, just now, a deplorable display by the expounders of the gospel.

On February 19, a 'plane left Brisbane (Queensland) for Sydney (New South Wales), a distance of between 500 and 600 miles. In the afternoon and evening, with a lengthening of the time that it was overdue, there was increasing alarm as to the fate of it. Aboard the 'plane were two pilots and five passengers.

The search for it became greater from day to day.

Just a week from the day it left Brisbane, a resourceful, daring Queenslander—Bernard O'Reilly—discovered what remained of the machine, together with two survivors from the party of seven; and for his heroic feat—for it was truly this—there is, I am pleased to say, a fair prospect of his being duly rewarded.

We come now to the intrusion of the parsonical element.

Speaking in Sydney, the Rev. A. R. Ebbs, of St. Matthew's Church, declared "it was a miracle of Divine guidance"—that is, that it was in this way that Mr. O'Reilly had been able to locate the wrecked 'plane, and rescue the two who had not been plunged to their doom with the others.

Other ministers by the dozen, throughout Australia, might be cited as expressing themselves to practically the same effect.

But what of the five who perished? A clerical reference was made to one of the victims, in these words: "At his home, the night before the tragic flight, he prayed with his mother for a safe journey. He was a Christian. There may be some who will ask why the Creator allowed such a thing to happen. But it might be remembered that 'all things work together for good.'"

What directly conflicting views have we here!

Two men are saved. One cleric attributes the saying to the Almighty—"a miracle of Divine guidance." The



other cleric deploras the dead. But, he reminds us, "all things work together for good." The question at once arises: How, if we are to give praise to a power for effecting a save, can we possibly withhold condemnation where the outcome was death?

Of course, I put the matter this way to show the utter inconsistency of the parsonical attitude.

Plainly there is no Divine interposition—beneficent or malevolent—in the affairs of the world. Prayers are as futile as curses. Clearly and entirely are we governed by natural forces—undeviating and relentless.

How appalling are the cruelties that we would have to attribute to a Divinity if we could think otherwise!

Take, for example, this clipping from a recent London paper, in reference to road accidents:—

I recently interviewed the father of an only child who had been run over. The bowels were ruptured; and after several operations, partial use has been restored. The right leg, which had been fractured, has been left shortened. The use of two fingers of the left hand has been lost. Now—at the age of ten, three years after the accident—the child has had only one month's schooling. Recently the eyesight became affected, and the child has had to be equipped with powerful glasses to correct a myopic condition. Further—at the Birmingham Assizes, on December 17, £350 damages were awarded to an eight-year-old child who, it was stated, would be in constant pain for the rest of his life, and would never be able to do things which a normal boy can do.

Especially would I commend this extract to the two parsons that I have cited with regard to the 'plane tragedy—the one who prates of "the miracle of guidance," and the other who derives comfort from the fatuity that "all things work together for good."

Fancy telling the two little sufferers in question that whatever happens is all for the best!

"T'would be the very limit in stupidity, if not brutality.

All I would like to ask with regard to the other pulpiti-pounder is this: Why, if there was any manifestation of the guiding hand in the rescue of the two 'plane passengers, the machine itself was not guided on a safe course; or why, in the collapse, the whole party were not preserved; or why did the two survivors have to remain undiscovered for seven days, languishing to the point of death without a morsel to eat?

Truly "the miracle of Divine guidance" was reprehensibly laggard in acting, when at last it did come into operation!

FRANK HILL.

Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.

#### HOW IT IS DONE

A great New York bookseller has recently announced to the world that whereas they used to stock Bibles as a side line among the staples, they now make loud announcements of bigger and better Bibles, and that the collection of Scriptures is still a tremendous business among bookmen. There have been articles in the magazines dwelling upon the best selling qualities of that work.

Currently, however, comes an article from a university student in the United States, who describes in detail how an army of thousands of similar students goes out every summer to make its tuition fees by selling Bibles to the peasantry.

His description of the methods adopted by the salesmen and the psychological subterfuges in which they are trained for the work make one wonder what is the matter with the Bible societies that they should stand for such chicanery in the selling of their holy wares.

He says it is no uncommon thing for a good student salesman to "clean up" as much as \$1,000 to \$1,500 during the summer in commissions. The commission upon sales, by the way, is generally 40 per cent.

He describes the rascally methods by which women are tempted to put in a new Bible in the absence of their husbands, how bootleggers will buy a couple rather than have the boys around their joints, how negroes who can not read are induced to buy because they believe it is unlucky to refuse to buy the holy word when it is offered. It is altogether a very revealing article and accounts for the best selling qualities of the Book in an entirely new light.

From "The Daily Province (Vancouver)  
January 11, 1937.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

### LONDON

#### INDOOR.

MODERN CULTURE INSTITUTE (Caxton Hall): 8.0, Thursday, April 15, Dr. Har Dayal—"The Wisdom of Shakespeare."

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES BRANCH N.S.S. (Kingston Market Place): 7.0, Speakers—E. C. Saphin and J. W. Barker.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Har Dayal, M.A., Ph.D.—"Ethical Aspects of Buddhism."

#### OUTDOOR

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Sunday, April 11, Mr. L. Ebury. South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Monday, April 12, Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.30, Sunday, Messrs. Bryant, Evans, Barnes and Tuson. *Freethinker* on sale at Kiosk. Should be ordered in advance to avoid disappointment. *Freethinker* and *Spain and the Church* on sale outside the Park gates

### COUNTRY

#### INDOOR

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Cobden Hall, 14 Cort Street, Blackburn): 7.30, Mr. Jack Clayton—"Freethought and Politics." Literature for sale.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Green Sunderland): 7.0, Mr. A. Wlanders.

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