

THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED by CHAPMAN COHEN •

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

Views and Opinions

More About Religion And Education

In another part of this issue there appears a rather lengthy letter from "Dominie," criticizing my comments on the proceedings of the Annual Conference of the National Union of Teachers in connexion with the attempt to induce the Blackpool teachers to march children to Church services during school hours. 300 of the teachers refused to comply with the request, and the N.U.T. decided to support the teachers in their refusal. The Union could hardly do otherwise. The employing authority had no power to compel the teachers to take the children to Church, since that did not come within the scope of the teacher's duty. The Education Authority could not dismiss the teachers who refused, nor could the visiting Inspectors censure them for their refusal. In the circumstances the N.U.T. made an "heroic" gesture that did not require great courage. The Conference said it would stand behind those of its members who were victimized for refusing to perform a task that was not in their contract. At law a teacher who was dismissed for acting as the Blackpool teachers did would have a quick and easy remedy. The N.U.T. would have been a laughing stock had it refused to give teachers the benefit of their Trade Union. The action of the Annual Conference was as safe and as unheroic as would be the commander of a battleship challenging a fishing smack to combat. And even a working man's Union will show itself interested in something a little higher than a question of wages and hours of labour.

* * *

The Clergy And The Teacher

"Dominie" whose opinion on the conduct of a school or on a question of education I should receive with all the deference due to one who has had a lengthy experience as both a teacher and an administrator, has in his criticism quite mistaken my point. I said, and after considering "Dominie's" letter, repeat, that the refusal to discuss the Blackpool ques-

tion at an open meeting of the Conference was not good, since it indicated a fear lest teachers in making known their individual refusal to join in taking children to Church, after an agreement had been arrived at between the Education Committee and a number of clergymen, might expose themselves to victimization in their professional career. And I said that one's opinion of teachers would be heightened if they said boldly, openly and individually (and this kind of avowal is of little value unless it is said openly and individually) that they will not tolerate the interference of the clergy in their public duties. The Union chose to debate the matter in private session. But it did make a public announcement that the Union would back the teachers. I repeat it could not do otherwise. "Dominie," says they discussed a matter of policy in private, and that was wise. If "policy" means the fact that the Union would defend its members from an unjustifiable attack, no one ever expected it would do otherwise, and that was said publicly. But the only thing that then needs discussion in private is the way in which that policy would be carried into effect, and I was not asking that the N.U.T. should inform its enemies just what they would do in carrying out its policy. That would be, in many instances, rank stupidity. One does not so play into the hands of the enemy. But it is quite plain that if teachers had been invited to debate in public the interference of the clergy with a teacher's duty, each speaker would have been known, and when he returned to duty would have been marked down as one who declined to co-operate with the clergy in abolishing what the Chairman of the Education Committee said was a very grave state of affairs—namely, that half the children in Blackpool did not belong to a Church and did not go to Sunday school. My desire was to see the teachers who did not believe in this marching children to Church to say so individually and openly. That is the only way in which such a declaration will do permanent good. The 300 in Blackpool had made their protest and were known. They deserve all credit for doing so. Why did not the teachers at the Conference follow suit? The only reply is that each one who did so would be known. They could not have been openly and officially rebuked, but they could be victimized. That this is what was feared, and not a mere decision as to policy, where only one policy was decently possible, is shown by the statement of the President that already the 300 teachers had been subjected to abuse by the clergy, members of the Education Committee and some part of the public. And we all know the strength and pertinacity of religious hatred, and how much it might do to stop promotion, and to harass the more sensitive. Merely to make terms with the N.U.T. on some general ground will not prevent religious bigotry working against teachers who are honest enough to let their opinions be known. It is when individuals allow

their opinions to be known, and it is also known that there is an organization behind them, that the operations of the clergy, and the working of unavowed religious tests will be stopped.

My whole case is that if teachers wish to break down this stealthy and cowardly religious terrorism they must act with greater courage than they displayed at the Conference. In such cases it is not enough to say "My union will not permit me to be discharged for not going outside my contract." Teachers must learn to say, "I will not be interfered with in my duties by those who have no right to interfere, or I shall not obey orders that ought not to be given or comply with requests that ought not to be made." It is with the individual that the settlement of this question ultimately rests.

* * *

Distinctions With A Difference

"Dominic" says the N.U.T. is fighting a legal issue. There was no such issue at stake. The President of the Union said "the authority recognized that it had no power to instruct the teachers" to co-operate in this religious crusade. There was no fight on a point of law, any more than there is a fight on a point of law when I ask the protection of the courts against a man who demands money with menaces. It is simply that the man cannot enforce his demands at law, but must get his way by terrorism. Which is exactly the case with Blackpool. Of course, the fact that the Union will take up any case where a teacher is treated unjustly, is very helpful; but what teachers fear is not treatment that is illegal and is remediable by law, but the treatment which is sly, undisclosed, and can no more be mended by law than a parent can be punished who never breaks a law but manages to make the life of his family a living hell. I accept the statement that the resolution of the Conference (that it would support the Blackpool teachers) was backed by a denominational teacher, and I expect that the vote was unanimous. But what I question is whether denominational teachers would announce individually that they would not join in any such arrangement as that which exists in Blackpool had the session been a public one. "Dominic" says the issue at the Conference was a legal issue, not a religious one. That is correct without being right. There was no legal issue, as I have already said, and this much was agreed on by the Education Committee, the religious committee, and the teachers involved. On that point the Conference simply had nothing to discuss, and on that issue the Blackpool teachers were not, or should not, have had any misgivings. Neither was there a religious issue, if by that is meant the confrontation by the teachers of a penalty if they did not fall in with the request made by the Committee. But there was a religious issue inasmuch as it was the feared consequence of a refusal of the teachers to co-operate in the march to Church, that brought the matter before the Conference. The 300 who refused were already known by name to the Blackpool Education Authority. It could not have been on their account that the discussion of whether the kind of thing contemplated at Blackpool should be tolerated elsewhere. It could only have been that speeches in open council meant publicity, and publicity meant risking promotion. And again I venture to suggest that the teacher who will encourage his pupils to openness of speech and criticism of authority is playing no mean part in developing the character of future citizens. Want of that is one of the gravest evils of present-day life. There was really no question before the Conference of engaging in a "big struggle." No such big struggle on this issue is possible. It does

not come within the law, and if it ever does, the example of the Union in this matter does not look promising.

* * *

Clearing The Air

"Dominic," says the N.U.T. is a professional organization, and is neither a religious nor a non-religious one. It does not ask a member whether he is religious or otherwise. True enough, and good enough, but quite beside the point. My remarks were directed to individual teachers, and their timidity in permitting their non-religious, or anti-religious opinions being known to the public. It was because of this, I assume, and I think teachers know, that individual speeches against the Blackpool arrangements were not made in public. And one can imagine the position of a teacher in some small town or locality, going back to his job and finding it known to the local committee, the local parsons, and the local bigots that he had declined to take part in any co-operation further than that laid down distinctly by Act of Parliament—for the furtherance of religious belief.

I am quite aware that the question of Secular Education has been debated at the Conference. But I am also aware of the fact that the mover of that resolution had the greatest difficulty in getting a teacher to second it. There were plenty who agreed with it, but there was the danger of publicity. Had that resolution been discussed in private session, no such difficulty would have been encountered, and the vote in its favour would have been larger. I have been a member of the Secular Education League Committee since its initiation. On that Committee and amongst its members we have had many clergymen of different denominations, and members of all sorts of religious beliefs. These were always ready to sign manifestos advocating the exclusion of religious teaching from State-supported schools. We have never been able to induce a sufficient number of teachers to sign a similar manifesto in favour of the policy that would prevent the schools being made the cockpit of a religious dog-fight. And for the avowed reason that if their opinions were known it would mean trouble.

When I used the phrase, the Head Teacher should be master in his own school, I was quite aware that he is employed by an authority and is subject to that authority—within specified limits. To say that a teacher so employed knows nothing of the religious opinions of his employers, is simply at variance with obvious facts. It is because he knows their opinions, and knows how they will act that he is chary of letting his own heretical opinions be known. He does not fear the law. If he has courage to let it be known that he will not bow to individual prejudices of either Committee man or parson that may protect him from ill-treatment, and he has a powerful union behind him to undertake his legal defence. It is the fear of the bigot, lay and clerical, that is the trouble. I have a very high conception of the function of the teacher, very much higher, I think, than have the majority of teachers. And my ideal is of one whose opinions should be among his proudest possessions, not kept in secret and gloated over as a miser does his gold, denying the world even a look at his treasure, but one who believes that opinion is among the most powerful factors in life, the most valuable in the formation of character, who encourages those in his care to question, question, question, and who believes in variation in opinion (as the naturalist encourages variation in his plants or animals) as the only way to produce better types. I want the teacher to resist all interference by outsiders with the dignity and legitimate authority of his office, and to do this in the hope of inducing his pupils to follow in his

steps by exhibiting a wholesome freedom of thought and expression. The school should be a place where voices are raised, and not merely where echoes are heard.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Forcing the Clock Back

"To what damned deeds religion urges men."

Lucretius.

"The lie at the lips of the priest."—Swinburne.

"All we now call supernatural is merely the normal imperfectly understood, but destined to be understood as knowledge widens.—Wells.

CHRISTIANS are not all selfish, but they have an extraordinary passion for monopoly with regard to the religion they profess so loudly. To associate with them is very like dining with a man who has all the pudding and two spoons. Even in the present state of economic depression they have done their best to transform this country into a mission-field, and still sigh to treat their fellow-citizens as rudely as they treat dark-skinned coolies abroad. Bible Societies have distributed sufficient copies of the Christian Scriptures to build a garden city, the British and Foreign Bible Society alone boasting openly of circulations of millions of copies. Tracts by the hundred tons are circulated. With the object of winning the ordinary citizen to religion the clerical pill has been well covered with sugar. Cinemas, concert parties, string bands, actors and actresses, tame Members of Parliament, reformed burglars, and converted policemen, have been used as lures for the religion of the "Man of Sorrows." There is, however, a fly in this precious ointment. Despite all these blandishments, the average citizen does not display any great anxiety for his eternal welfare. Even the persuasive powers of imported evangelists, with lungs of leather and throats of brass, have failed to penetrate the cheerful stoicism of the ordinary population.

Driven to desperation by the apathy of the citizens, the catspaws of the clergy have resorted to the public distribution of tracts. One of these publications, of which a large number appear to have been distributed, bears the arresting title: "What is there after Death?" and it preaches a hell of literal fire. Here is a passage which shows how far present-day religion is in harmony with culture and civilization:—

I wonder if you die unsaved whether you will see your believing wife after death? She, afar off, and happy with her Saviour; and you with the curse of unforgiven sin upon you in hell. And some of your children are in heaven, and others are on their way. And when you die your Christless death, will you for a moment see afar off your little ones with the light of heaven on their faces, and the peace of God upon their heads? Oh! these eternal separations! Families broken up for all eternity. Some in light and some in darkness.

Other tracts, apparently sold in quantities for distribution, hate no jot of this fiery damnation. Such publications as these raise once more the question, not only of the alleged high spiritual and moral tone of the Christian Religion, but also of the conduct of the Christians themselves. These dogmatic tracts, survivals from the conventional Victorian era, and even earlier periods, voice emphatically very different views to those apologetic and invertebrate declarations put forward by artful defenders of the Christian Superstition in their contests with Freethinkers. In controversy it is the fashion for the champions of Orthodoxy to explain, smilingly, that, in attacking the

barbaric dogmas of hell-fire and eternal torment, the Intellectuals are but flogging a dead horse. That quadruped, however, has a distressing habit of resur-recting, and that there is plenty of kick left in that ancient animal is demonstrated by the literature published for the alleged benefit of the general public, and also in that issued for the instruction of the unsuspecting young.

There is no doubt that a number of Christians are daily endeavouring to force back the clock of civilization. Anglo-Catholics, and some minor Nonconformist bodies, are as reactionary as Romanists and Salvationists. In a booklet, bearing the imprint of Mowbray & Co., and entitled *The Blessed Sacrament: Drawn from the Writings of the Saints*, the antique savage views are repeated with the bad old shocking realism of the Ages of Faith and Ignorance. This particular publication, it should be borne in mind, is used for young people who are preparing for their first communion, and these awful ideas are actually forced on them at the most impressionable period of their lives. This is the kind of thing that some of the clergy still teach privately, while, in public, they hypocritically flatter the Freethinkers by a pretended retreat:—

We have about us, or, to speak more truly, we are ourselves immortal souls. We are beings who have once been born, but who now can never die. We came out of nothing, but we cannot go into nothing again. O God forbid, the merciful great God forbid, we should pass into nothing! When they who have led lives of pleasure, of covetousness, or self-willed sin—when such come to be on their death-beds, they may perhaps feel that awful impossible wish that they could pass into nothing, for to be nothing were better than to be in the strong grip of Satan and the intolerable heats of Hell—the living in fire, the feeding on fire, the breathing fire, the being clothed in fire, the thirsting for cool water where all, all is fire, above, beneath, on this side, on that side, a far-stretching country of burning fire.

Freethinkers who imagine that one of the oldest and most barbarous religious dogmas is losing its hold on the national mind because the cunning clergy appear to be giving the old savage ideas faint support in their pulpit and public utterances will do well to remember that, while the objectionable dogmas are still taught throughout the Christian world, the protests of the humanitarians are sought to be rigorously boycotted. Wherever the clergy retain a vestige of their ancient power they still preach a horrible hell of literal fire. Roman Catholics everywhere have never damped a solitary spark of their fiery damnation. The Church of England, particularly the High Churchmen, who form sixty per cent of that body, still holds forth on brimstone; and the Salvation Army, which caters for the religious wants of the bed-rock and least-educated of the community, includes hell in its trade-mark, "Blood and Fire." It is worthy of the followers of an old-world Oriental Superstition, who, outraging the spirit of the age, pray for rain and fine weather, and for individual members of a Royal Family, christen battleships and bless regimental flags.

Thus the priesthood circle round their idol, waving their censers and shouting their hymns, while their ample draperies effectively hide from the public eye the savage survivals embodied in their creed. Indeed, in tracing the genealogy of religion, it has been found that its primal root is fear. And in all antiquity no more horrible picture is to be found than the Christian idea of Hell. All antiquity was cruel, but the Christian priests contrived to surpass all others in horror. If philosophy ever were needed it was in their monstrous days of priestly power. Fear was a god more serviceable to them than Jehovah. Christ-

ianity's brightest days were in the dark ages. Reaction is nearly always a calamity. But it would be a greater calamity for this country if the clock were to be forced back by a number of consecrated charlatans, who may have been converted to Christianity but have never been converted to civilization. Fortunately, few persons to-day will be influenced by such crude threats as made our forefathers' flesh creep. On the highest moral and ethical grounds the preaching and teaching of the old, savage ideas concerning an imaginary Satan and his flaming abode would be reprobated by the majority of decently educated people.

MIMNERMUS.

Henry Hetherington—1792-1849

To many people of the present generation Henry Hetherington is probably nothing more than a name. Born in 1792, when the governing classes were commencing a war against free speech, and a free press with a ferocity equalled only by that carried on in our own times, he was destined to become a formidable fighter against the prevailing tyranny. In his boyhood he was remarked for his intelligence and kindly disposition. He was apprenticed to Hansard, the well-known printer of parliamentary reports. Upon the expiration of his apprenticeship, trade being slack, he found himself out of work, and so remained for eighteen months. He thereupon went to Belgium, and worked at his trade there for some time. While there he read of the superb munificence with which the English Parliament had rewarded the "Iron Duke," the hero of Waterloo. "See that!" said Henry proudly to a fellow workman. "Look what a fine country ours is. See how we reward our soldiers for fighting for us." "Ay, ay," replied the Belgian in broken English, "it is a tam fine country, and a tam fine ting for de Duke, but it is a tam bad country, and a tam bad ting for de people." This gave Henry pause to think, and, we are told, somewhat accounted for his ultimate Radicalism.

Upon his return to England, Hetherington became connected with the "Freethinking Christians." Evidently the "Freethinking" attracted him, but with the "Christians" the Freethinking was less than a minus quantity. Amongst its members were several persons who played a considerable part in public affairs in after years, the most prominent, perhaps, being W. H. Ashurst, who became solicitor to the Society for the Suppression of Taxes on Knowledge. Soon there were serious differences amongst the members of the Freethinking Christians. It was these differences that produced a pamphlet from Hetherington's pen, probably his first appearance in print. The full title is, "Principles and Practice Contrasted; or, A Peep into the only true Church of God upon Earth, commonly called Freethinking Christians." The copy before me is the 2nd edition, dated 1828. The trouble evidently began over the admission of a Jew to membership. The Jew had been invited to attend, and was about to take his seat in the place appropriated for strangers when he was invited to take his seat within the "middle wall of partition." He attended for some months and began to look upon himself as "one of the brethren." "However," says Hetherington, "he was in error; because he had not yet signed the printed paper drawn up by 'the only true Church of God upon Earth'; and how could any man be a member of the 'Family of God' who had not complied with a formality so essential?"

Some of the members began to think they had been indiscreet in inviting the Jew and wished to be rid of him. There was no charge against him, but they wanted to be rid of him! An elder deputed a member to visit the Jew, with the injunction, "Rid us of this Jew." The member declined to do this dirty work, and then there was trouble all round. In the end, several members, amongst whom was Hetherington, were cut off from "the only true Church of God upon Earth." The concluding paragraph of the pamphlet runs, "I have no further observations to make—my words have been spoken in truth and sobriety; and leaving them in the hands of those with whom truth is the object of search, and the criterion of judgment, I lay down my pen with the consolation that I have done my duty, and endeavoured to dispel the delusion in which a credulous public are held by a society of the most skilful and consummate hypocrites of the present day—the Freethinking Christians."

Hetherington now began to devote his time and energies to the working-class. Meetings were called, small bodies were organized, delegates were appointed. Towards the end of 1830 he was appointed to draw up a circular for the formation of trades' unions. That document was adopted at a further meeting of delegates, and the "National Union of the Working Classes" came into existence. This body exercised a great influence during the whole of the 1830's, and finally merged into the Chartist Movement. From the beginning of October, 1830, to the end of June, 1831, Hetherington's Press was kept busy. From it was issued a series of political publications, uniform in form, but having no general title. Each number had on the front page the famous design which marked his defiance of the infamous press laws, and his determination to achieve the Freedom of the Press. There were twenty-five numbers published from October 1 to November 23, 1830. The first number, October 1, 1830, was entitled, "To the People of England," and addressed its readers, "Friends, Brethren, and Fellow Country Men." It was more of the nature of a prospectus. It was four pages long octavo. The remaining twenty-four were four pages quarto. The series were simply dated, not numbered. On December 25, 1830, appeared

"A Penny Paper for the People,"
by the
Poor Man's Guardian
containing

A comprehensive Digest of all the Political
Occurrences of the Week.
Saturday, Dec. 25, 1830. Price One Penny.

In the Spring of 1831 he commenced *The Republican*. The second number was indicted as not conforming to the Stamp Act. Hetherington was represented by counsel, who clearly proved that legally the publication did not come under the Act. The charges of the prosecution were of such a vile nature that Hetherington claimed the right of personally defending himself. Here we get a glimpse of the man's force of character. When he rose to speak, "No, sir," exclaimed the prosecution, "you are not allowed to say a word." Hetherington: "But I will, sir. The court, I am sure, will not allow an unjustifiable attack upon my character, and not allow me to reply to his unwarrantable aspersions." "Yes," said the court, "we will hear you." In his remarks Hetherington pointed out, giving numerous examples, that by their words and actions, the Government allowed the law to be violated with impunity by the rich, whilst they enforced all its odious provisions against the publications of the poor. The

final paragraph of the report of the case* reads "The Chairman, passing over all the truths submitted to his consideration, observed that the conviction was so carefully worded, that he did not see how a single syllable could be altered without impairing the document. Indeed, he appeared not a little surprised that the appellants should have wasted his honest efforts before a bench of Magistrates, whose minds were impervious to truth and justice."

That case decided for Hetherington the future and the course he would pursue. On the following Saturday, July 9, 1831, appeared the first number of "The Poor Man's Guardian, A Weekly Newspaper for the People. Published contrary to 'Law' to try the power of 'Might' against 'Right.'" Such was the heading, and so it continued during the four years of its existence. In place of the Government stamp was an illustration of a printing press, labelled "Knowledge is Power," and on the former, "Liberty of the Press." This was so designed as to imitate as nearly as possible the Government stamp. Though meant to imitate, it was not intended to deceive, as will be seen. The only case approaching this, that occurs to my memory, was the case of Bradlaugh's *National Reformer*. Under a similar act he was called upon to give sureties in the sum of £400 against the appearance of blasphemy or sedition in the columns of his paper, and a claim from the Commissioners of Inland Revenue of £20 for each separate copy of the *National Reformer* published. As the paper had been running weekly for about eight years this would amount to no inconsiderable sum. This was followed by a letter from the Inland Revenue Office, from which could be extracted from its legal jargon, "Pay up." Bradlaugh's action was prompt, as it ever was. The following week, May 3, 1868, the *National Reformer* came out, and under the title was the answer, "Published in Defiance of Her Majesty's Government, and of the 60 George III. Cap. 9." In the same number was Bradlaugh's letter to the Commissioners, in which he said, "With all humility, I am obliged to bid you defiance; you may kill the *National Reformer*, but it will not commit suicide." A prosecution followed, lasting many, many weary months, and costing some hundreds of pounds. Finally, Bradlaugh won with flying colours, the Government being so ignominiously defeated that it was compelled soon after to repeal the Act. John Stuart Mill wrote to him, "You have gained a very honourable success in obtaining a repeal of the mischievous Act by your persevering resistance." Collet, in his *History of the Taxes on Knowledge*, says, "The Defence of Mr. Bradlaugh was the most valuable contribution ever made to the liberty of the Press." Hetherington's victory was much longer in coming, but eventually it did come, as we shall see.

AMBROSE G. BARKER.

(To be continued.)

* Since the above was written, it has come to the knowledge of the writer that this case was an appeal from a conviction at Bow Street, where Hetherington was sentenced to six months' imprisonment. Evidently, *The Poor Man's Guardian* was a favourite name for a newspaper with Hetherington, for on December 25, 1830, he had, as mentioned above, issued "A Penny Paper for the People by the Poor Man's Guardian, containing A Comprehensive digest of all the Political Occurrences of the Week." It was for this unstamped paper that Hetherington was prosecuted. He appealed against the conviction, but the appeal was disallowed.

Nothing should be left undone to impress upon the young that freedom of thought is an axiom of human progress.—Professor Bury, "A History of Freedom of Thought."

Merlin's May Meeting

The little dog laughed
To see such craft—
The Ampulla, the Oil and the Spoon.

It is probable that, at the moment of writing, the Ampulla and Spoon, having been taken out of their hiding-place, are receiving liberal rubbings with unsanctified plate-powder. The Ampulla is a gold flask in the form of a bird with out-stretched wings—there is a difference of opinion as to what bird is supposed to be represented; it may even be of a species unknown to ornithologists; merely a biblical creation. Into the Ampulla is poured the sacred Oil, but before this can be done the neck has to be unscrewed. When the Oil is wanted it is poured out through the beak and into a special and highly-ornate Spoon. About 1650, the Regalia and Royal Treasures were amongst the things that Cromwell knocked about a bit; the Ampulla disappeared and had to be remade, but the Spoon survived the ordeal. The Spoon goes back to the reign of Henry II., but, all the same, like the poor it is always with us. It is seven and a half inches long, which is unimportant, but the bowl is divided by a ridge down the middle, and when the Oil is poured into the spoon, an archiepiscopal finger reclines for a while in each division prior to smearing the head, the breast, and the palms of the hands of the King or Queen with oily cotton-wool. This is all-important.

One can imagine the perturbation of mind existing at the present moment in the Upper Circle regarding the ingredients of this Holy Oil. It is the Dean of Westminster's job to look after this. It is up to him to see that the correct prescription is handed to the apothecary. If the stuff is correct and the right incantation is muttered over it on the morning of the day on which it is to be used, then everything our Church can do in the matter has been done. If the ultimate result is unfortunate then, it is evident, a mistake has been made with either the ingredients or the incantation. An alarming amount depends, it would appear, on the good faith of the chemist. A surreptitious pinch of nutmeg or a drop of vanilla may produce in the realm dire confusion; so, for that matter, may a stutter or lisp in the spell-binder. It is mortifying to think that a most excellent monarch may be doomed to a brief and sleepless reign owing to an incompetent or humorous dispenser, or a humming and hawing ecclesiastic.

For the Coronation of James II. the stuff was compounded by the King's Apothecary, who, for Two Hundred of the best, turned out something "exceeding rich and fragrant." All the same, the qualities of the Oil have been far from uniform, for when our Queen Elizabeth, of blessed memory, had survived the ceremony, and was getting herself into a more comfy frock, she complained that the oil "smelt ill." We know, as well, that accidents have occurred before over this anointing business. On the high authority of King David (Psalm 133), we learn that when the Oil was poured over Aaron's head, it ran down into the old man's whiskers and thence over his nice, clean smock. There was a howdy-doo! It is true that one cannot have too much of a really good thing, but then there is also a state known as being "righteous over-much," and that, we surmise, would be precisely the state in which Aaron found himself.

The Dean of Westminster knows something about the constituents of that Holy Oil, but information of that kind will not be broadcasted. Safe and snug in Sacerdotalism, will it remain. Holy Roman will, of course, sneer at our poor concoction, for their Merlin has, without doubt, another Genuine Article. What

troubles us more is that it appears that the recipe provided by the First Person of the Trinity has been wantonly departed from. This is disquieting. One is told that there have been on occasions over forty ingredients in our Anglican grease. This definitely rules out the prescription of the Ancient of Days, whose interest in such subjects, be it well noted, was far from being perfunctory. What did the Father say? :—

Take thou also unto thee principal spices, of pure myrrh five hundred shekels and of sweet cinnamon half so much, even two hundred and fifty shekels, and of cassia five hundred shekels after the shekel of the sanctuary, and of olive oil an hin.

"This shall be an holy anointing oil unto me throughout your generations," spoke the Lord. God was proud of this Oil, and wanted to keep it strictly amongst Archbishops, Bishops, Deans, and their kind. One does not mind, in reason, proper pride in the Deity, but the irascible Old Gentleman invariably overdid things :—

Whoever compoundeth any like it, or whosoever putteth any of it upon a stranger, shall even be cut off from his people.

Discretion is the better part of valour. Tweaking the beard of Jehovah does not strike one as a becoming pastime for a Dean. One is inclined to think it safer in the circumstances to stick to the old firm. The testiness of Jehovah is well-known; not only did he specialize in recipes, but he made it quite unpleasant for those who refused to stand to attention. *No Englishman would like another incident at the Coronation such as occurred with Queen Elizabeth.* And the Bible, as usual, shows us the way out. For the Lord said quite a large number of things. Here is one more :—

Take unto thee sweet spices, stacte and onycha, and galbanum; these sweet spices with pure frankincense of each shall there be a like weight.

And thou shalt make it a perfume, a confection after the art of the apothecary, tempered together, pure and holy.

And once again came the reminder from Him "whose name was Jealous" :—

Whosoever shall make like unto that, to smell thereto, shall even be cut off from his people.

Now, although I am a Freethinker, I love, within limits, my country; and wish it well. I don't believe in the Gods, but I am afraid of them. A recurrence of the querulous complaint of Queen Elizabeth after her greasing, would, I consider, be another grave blow to our national prestige at this delicate moment of history. The Coronation Ceremony should go through without a sniff. I lay no claim to Inspiration. It is only common-sense on a religious occasion to turn to the Sacred Volume, and use one's mother wit. Let us take, say, a couple of hins of Jehovah's Ointment and add thereto an hin or a half hin of the Perfume.* *In neither case must the prescription be departed from one jot or one tittle.* Then have the mixture well shaken by a Minor Canon, and leave the rest to the Voice that breathed o'er Eden. I am confident that what the inhabitants of this island want more than anything else is a nice, clean ceremony.

T. H. ELSTON.

* If this should prove too large a quantity (though I see no reason for parsimony), the unused ointment could be de-hallowed by having the formula repeated backward over it. It could then be distributed to the poor to serve as a solid brilliantine.

Wanted—A White God

THE Scotch "Wee Frees," like their fellow-fundamentalists, the proprietors of the *Christian Herald*—that wonderful creation of the notorious Baxter, the prophet (whose prophecies never came to pass)—are up in arms against this showing of the film "Green Pastures," in which an American negro, who smokes and takes a drink, represents the Almighty. It is a pity that narrow nationalism and racial prejudices should have so great a hold in such an enlightened land as Scotland—the source and home of Presbyterianism, and the mother of so many distinguished thinkers! But, as the historian Buckle has shown, "puir auld Scotland" was for long the victim of the dourest and gloomiest Calvinism, and its influence has not even yet been eradicated.

To satisfy pietists of all nations, God would certainly need to be a quick change artist. But by what right or title do the "Wee Frees" demand the suppression of the American negroes' representation of God? What is *their* conception of the Deity? Doubtless they think of him as a rugged Highland figure with Sinaitic features who speaks both English and Gaelic, and who in human affairs rules as a veritable dictator. And he must be *white* in the skin, however black or red his hair may be! Is it that the "Wee Frees" apprehend that some people may be lured by the gentle, paternal conversation of the negroes' god, who are repelled by the fiery and thunderous denunciations hurled at humanity by *their* God? Evidently, according to them, the less human in all respects that the Almighty is the better for all concerned!

Human beings are white, black, yellow, red and brown. And each section is entitled to think of God (if it believes in a God) in terms of its own racial characteristics. No doubt it will be retorted that to satisfy the notions of all pietists the world over, one would have to invent a polychromatic God. Well, is that altogether to be barred as a conception? There is much in current events to support the conclusion that God is a very chameleon. The negroes hail him as "one ob demselves." So do British, French, German and Italian Christians respectively. Indeed there may be as many conceptions of God as there are individual believers! But the God of the "Wee Frees" must apparently be kept in the background.

Using the term "white" metaphorically in the sense of straight, honest and clean, it would certainly be to the advantage of all believers if they could reveal a God of that kind. Hitherto, in so far as God has been explained by his earthly representatives, his character is open to very damaging criticism. The world is always being told of the "great things" God will do for Humanity; but they never occur. An examination of God's promises in his "Holy Book" shows that he is a covenant-breaking and unreliable Deity; and it is high time that the best human brains should unite in a campaign to rid the world of the galling yoke of supernaturalism, and to equip man for the task of his own deliverance, emancipation and elevation. Pietistic scribblers in the daily press are for ever claiming that every human advance socially and morally is due to God and Christianity! This claim is conceded by ignorant and illiterate persons; but the diligent and impartial student of history knows that it is without foundation. How long shall we remain deluded and deceived?

IGNOTUS.

In the times when prayer and the associated religious practices were the chief means of fighting disease, the infant mortality was appalling.—Dr. H. J. Bridges.

Acid Drops

The Archbishop of Canterbury and others of the "dignified clergy" have assured the world that the coronation is a great religious ceremony in which the King is consecrated by God and the nation is dedicated to the service of God. It is actually more than that. It is a transformation of the king by an incarnation of the tribal God, or by his acting as an instrument of God. But the Archbishop is right. The whole ceremony is essentially a religious one, and to see it shorn of the many rationalizations that express its essential character one has to compare our coronation ceremony with that which takes place amongst primitive peoples when the chief is created by magical ceremonies similar to those which will take place in Westminster Abbey on May 12. It is essentially a reproduction of one of the most primitive ceremonies in the history of uncivilized mankind.

But seeing that God has so much to do with it, it seems strange that such elaborate preparations have to be made. Rehearsal after rehearsal has to be made; there are no less than six of the coronation itself, with dummy representatives of the King and Queen. Their rehearsals one may safely assume take place in private. The horses are rehearsed, and a carefully-timed rehearsal of the procession is made. Time and money might have been saved if the whole business had been handed over to Hollywood for management. It is a gigantic circus, enshrining one of the most superstitious ceremonies in the history of mankind. Those journalists who wish to take a day off on May 12, may quite safely write their descriptions of the process and the ceremony now. All they need add is alternative pieces suitable for a fine day, a wet day, or a dull day.

If one wishes to read a straightforward account of the deliberate assassination of a people, one cannot do better than get from their public libraries Marshall De Bono's account of the Italian conquest of Abyssinia. Marshall De Bono was in charge of the Italian army, until it was taken over by his successor. The introduction is by Mussolini. It is therefore official. And it is as clear a piece of wholesale plunder and murder as history can produce. The Italians had no real quarrel with Abyssinia; the Abyssinians, it is confessed, had no wish to go to war, and the Italians had to force the Abyssinians into resistance. The war was decided on in 1932, and Mussolini said that it had to be brought about by 1936, not later. Nothing more deliberate has ever occurred in the annals of national criminology. And no one but a born fool can imagine that our own Government was not perfectly well informed as to what was going on. In the language of criminal law our Government was an accessory to the fact. Mussolini himself stands as a self-convicted assassin, and when history comes to be truly written, the place of Messrs. Baldwin, Hoare, Eden and Simon will not be an enviable one.

The Annual report of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel complains of the falling off of its income, but it has substantial reserves in the shape of legacies and investments, so it goes on. The first factor is welcome as indicating the falling off in a useless and foolish propaganda—useless that is for anything good, although it may be very useful for other purposes. Income has been decreasing at the rate of nearly £4,000 a year. The report has the usual account of the benefits received by natives from the preaching of the Society's agents, and on this three comments may be made. First, the benefits are not so striking to impartial travellers, second, the quality of missionary boys is rated extremely low by white Christian settlers (the Bishop of Kimberley mournfully admits that even some of those trained for the ministry are guilty of "immorality") and third, these religious agents fight hard to retain control of certain agencies among the people they are trying to convert, and so block better work being done by others. And when one takes the work of this Society in European countries one may well ask whether there is any need for

British people sending paid missionaries abroad for the purpose of entering into a sectarian warfare with the peoples of Europe?

As has always been the case, the report makes plain the fact that natives take from their white masters many of their faults and few of their virtues. Native girls crimson their lips and toe-nails, and take readily to cigarettes. Native customs that imposed some kind of social discipline, are broken by missionary influence without others of equal value being acquired. And the process of social weakening is made the easier, one imagines, by the fact that the religious beliefs the missionary brings are on all fours with those that the native is asked to surrender. Personally, we always feel that Christianity ought to get on with primitive peoples. It is in alignment with primitive thought, and the native is not sophisticated enough to be bothered with the trifling consideration of a difference in language. With the more highly developed people, such as the Hindoos, the report admits that the natives note that even the adoption of Christianity does not place them on the same level as the whites, while they sink to a lower level with their own people.

Having returned from her honeymoon the Princess Juliana, of Holland finds herself attacked by a number of religious sects because she and her husband had occasionally gone to places of amusement on Sundays. The British military authorities have also got into trouble in Scotland for encouraging a similar offence. They have recognized that even a soldier may be an independent human being, and have permitted games among soldiers on Sunday. Some of the "unco' guid" are up in arms and assert that it will prevent many joining the army. If soldiers are given the liberty of civilians in this matter there is no knowing what may happen. Privates may even speak to officers in the streets without being previously spoken to by them. But games on Sunday! What revolutionary activities may next be discovered in the army?

That Christians are not having it all their own way in China is shown by Dr. Reuhelt in the *International Review of Missions*. "It is a fact," he writes, "that an increasing number of Christians are joining the Buddhist Society in China. They include not only ordinary Church members, but also pastors, evangelists, and Christian *literati*, as well from the Protestant churches as from the Roman Catholic Church." And this after millions of pounds have been spent by missionaries to bring the "heathen Chinese" to the one true belief.

Archaeological discoveries do not seem always to go as their supporters often wish. A writer in the *News-Chronicle* ruefully admits that if the recent excavations in Jerusalem pan out as it is feared, it may be that "generations of devout Christians from all over the world have been worshipping at the wrong sepulchre." Furthermore, he says "the evidence of the spade is very much more reliable than oral tradition, or unscientific history." All this means is that it may be found without question that there is no evidence whatever to substantiate the "authentic" site of the Holy Sepulchre, the Via Dolorosa, and the stations of the Cross. And this would be "a most serious matter for the various religious institutions in the Holy City." The truth is that it may not be very long before the whole story of Calvary is proved unauthentic, and also that of Jesus himself.

The *Literary Digest* of New York describes the automobile-church which the Catholics have furnished—complete with "blue, white and gold liturgical altar before which the robed priest says the ancient ritual mass." A section of the Catholic Car contains the Chalice and other holy vessels, another is filled with tracts and proselytizing pamphlets, and yet another compartment provides sleeping accommodation for the priest. Rather unkindly the *Literary Digest* heads its description: "GOSPEL by GAS"!

Mr. Ralph Waldo Trine has found—at any rate he says he has—that “Jesus spoke always in Aramaic” and that the Aramaic words translated as “Eat my body and drink my blood,” mean nothing of the kind. This great authority assures the world in his latest book, *The Man Who Knew*, that these apparently Cannibalistic words actually and truly mean. “Endure Suffering and Hard Work.” We prefer the more colloquial interpretation, “Work Like Helen B. Merry.”

According to the Rev. Donald Soper, the ancient Greeks can be summarized in a phrase:—

The highest civilization of Greece was a civilization which took the unwanted baby girl and exposed that child upon the hillside to be devoured by wolves, and even Socrates had no word of disapproval. Into that world came Jesus Christ.

This is just about as truthful as for a foreigner to declare that England to-day consists of Jack-the-Rippers and clerical liars. We advise Mr. Soper to study a good book about Greece, even a Christian one like “Gesta Christi,” before he dares to slander the Glory that was Greece.

In the *Methodist Recorder* is a review, signed “W. F. Lofthouse,” of the latest book by the German-Swiss Evangelist, Karl Barth. Mr. Lofthouse—otherwise appreciative of Barth—protests rather severely against the author’s “neglect of all the concrete ethical teachings of the Old and New Testament.” Perhaps Mr. Barth is only too well aware of the painfully bloodthirsty character of the “ethical teaching” of the Bible. We suggest that Mr. Lofthouse should study *The Bible Handbook*—perhaps then he would agree that Barth has discreetly avoided disaster. One can praise Bible ethics or one can read the Bible—nobody can do both.

Dr. Herbert Farmer has a difficult job in the *Christian World*, where he endeavours to prove “The Passion Not Passive.” The alliterative title is just a pun. Nothing could be less “active” than the submission of Christ to His doom, unless indeed His evident reluctance to “drink the cup” qualifies His passive acceptance of “Thy Will be Done.” In fact the text most favoured of Holy Commentators to describe the very submissive death of Jesus has always been: “He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, as a sheep before her shearers is dumb. . . .” Yet Dr. Farmer tries to suggest—in language as frank as it is unusual: “We think of Him as being nailed to the cross. . . . Not so. . . . It is Jesus Who is doing the nailing all the time.” What our loquacious preacher should say is that Christians since Christ’s day have been “nailing” mankind on a cross of intolerant persecution.

The Rector of Trowbridge Parish Church is issuing cards on which are the following words:—

I acknowledge myself a Christian, and as a witness to my faith I promise to attend church at least once a Sunday unless prevented by any illness or other serious cause.

The signing of this is expected to bring luke-warm Christians to a realization of their Christian duty. The Rector would perhaps be the first to admit that the Gospel of Christ and Him Crucified, presented with musical accompaniment, seems curiously ill-designed for its purpose. You see it was the God who fashioned William and Lucy who also fashioned the Gospel for William and Lucy. There may be an explanation, but it eludes the non-theological mind.

Councillor Boyce is the retiring candidate for the Newburn Urban Council, and is hoping to be re-elected. He has recently been defeated in the County Council Election, and at a public meeting he has been saying that “the rumour was broadcast in the town by some despicable person or persons that, among other things, I was an Atheist.” Despicable persons do circulate vote-catching rumours on these occasions, but Councillor Boyce

does actually regard the *canard* as a “malicious slander.” It is possible that his primitive methods of combating such attacks lost him more votes than he imagined. Many quite well-known reformers have been Atheists and have never wilted under that type of criticism.

A speaker at a public meeting in the Durham Road Baptist Church, Gateshead, relieved himself as follows:—

If I visit many of our Nonconformist churches, do I find Jesus being preached as the Lord Christ our Saviour and Redeemer? No, I find just merely Jesus as a good man who sets us a good example. Do I find Bible study?—No; literary societies. Do I find Christian Endeavour societies?—No; operatic performances.

Can we wonder that our churches decline? Thirsting, hungering souls don’t want entertainment. They can get that in the outside world far better than the churches can do it. They want the living water. They want the bread of life.

Most denominations are split into two such sections to-day. One section, with which the speaker sympathized, has all the honesty; the other has all the brains.

The Rev. E. C. Monk is the Principal of Highbury House School, Doncaster. He writes to the *Yorkshire Evening Post* explaining that as he is a Christian man, he has no option but to approve the recent birching of nine boys by command of the magistrates at Doncaster. The Reverend Pedagogue is eager to praise the magistrates—“if there be a fault it is that six strokes, and not three, should have been inflicted,” he complains of the “prevailing maudlin sympathy” and “squeamishness” of those who hold that the practice of birching degrades both the person birched and the person who birches. Such misguided people are, he claims, “unmindful of Holy Writ.”

Mr. Monk takes sanctuary behind Holy Writ, along with slave-holders, witch-smellers, heretic burners and all those who would keep the evolving morality of man stationary. We will leave him there and wish him joy of his company. “Flogging is of Divine origin,” says Mr. Monk. Flagellation cannot survive on the testimonials of Divinities. Ordinary men and women are beginning to see that man cannot be tortured into goodness, and that there is no real reforming power in brutal punishment. If Jehovah thought otherwise, Jehovah must go—and the Rev. E. C. Monk, Principal of Highbury House School, Doncaster, and his kind, must go with him.

Fifty Years Ago

It is not hard to understand Our Father’s partiality. What should we think of a human father who lapped one child in luxury, surrounded him with every delight of spirit and sense, gave him the highest education wealth could purchase, and leisure to pursue exalted aims or gratify his personal tastes; and who brought up another child in an outhouse, starved him, vitiated his blood, wrecked his constitution, kept him in perfect ignorance of good, and taught him nothing but bestiality? Should we not cry shame on such a Father? Nay, would not the law interfere, and make him pay a better regard to the duties of a parent? Yet God is precisely such a father. He lets one child be born in a palace, and another in a hovel or a slum. He gives one child plenty of good food, and feeds another on riff-raff. He places one child in a happy home, and another in a hideous school of vice and crime. He gives one child learning, and keeps another ignorant. He makes one child work hard for a bare pittance, and keeps another in luxury without labour from the cradle to the grave. Mr. Gladstone and Currell are both God’s children, so are Shakespeare and the village idiot, and so are the Prince of Wales and the last pauper who was buried in a parish egg-case.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

S.V.—The objection to birching, or caning a child is that, on the part of the child it creates fear and encourages deceit, on the part of the bircher it coarsens and brutalizes, besides often masking a very objectionable form of sadism.

R. WALTERS.—We may be writing on the Coronation later. As a matter of scientific anthropology, the clearest traces of primitive customs and beliefs are nearly always found among the very ignorant sections of a community and among its aristocracy.

J. M. CANN.—It is an expression of Christian impertinence, but so common that most people take it as a matter of course. Thanks for cutting.

W. FLETCHER.—Yes, it can be done, but it will have more force if we wait for a suitable occasion. We will bear it in mind.

FOR Circulating and Distributing the *Freethinker*.—S. Thompson, 58.

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

The "*Freethinker*" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to this office.

The offices of the National Secular Society and the Secular Society Limited, are now at 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Telephone: Central 1367.

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

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

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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

Secretaries of N.S.S. Branches should by now have sent in the forms containing names and addresses of delegates attending the Annual Conference in Liverpool at Whit Sunday. There is every indication of an excellent attendance, which is another reason why delegates, members, and secretaries should send their requirements, (hotel accommodation, luncheon tickets, etc.), to the General Secretary, 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4 without further delay.

Two more titles have been added to the series of *Pamphlets for the People*. These are, *Must We Have a Religion?* and *The Devil*. The first is useful in relation to the "Recall to Religion" campaign, and the second is a lively treatise on the greatest of the Christian deities.

The matter of the Blackpool teachers, which is dealt with in both "Views and Opinions," and in our correspondence, has a still uglier aspect by a statement of one of the members of the Education Committee that there had been bargaining going on, not merely between the Committee and the clergy, but also between the Committee and the teachers. The *Schoolmaster* also states that teachers had been asked to be loyal to their Churches, with which loyalty, as teachers, they had nothing to do. This gives greater force to our contention that straightforwardness and loyalty to the schools—the only loyalty with which teachers, as such, are concerned—will never be general until teachers who are opposed to any clerical interference with school-life say so as openly as do those

teachers who voice their sympathy with religion. That will tend to decrease, if not altogether to stop these clerical tactics of which complaint is being made. Not for the first time, we ask those teachers who do not believe in religion in the schools to say so quite openly. Clerical tactics have never yet been overcome by silence. At present silence of teachers who believe in Secular Education places a premium on timidity and a tax on the few who exhibit complete honesty. It also helps in the punishment of the more courageous in their ranks.

The Manchester Branch N.S.S. holds its Annual General Meeting to-day (April 25), at the King's Cafe, Oxford Street, Manchester, at 7 p.m. Some important items are down for discussion, including future activity, indoor and open-air, and all members are asked to make a point of being present.

The *Daily Mirror*, another of our journals for the great unlearned, has a reference in it to the blasphemy laws which either exhibits the writer's ignorance on which every newspaper writer ought to know something, or is a deliberate attempt to mislead. Noting the Bill for the Abolition of the Blasphemy Laws just introduced into the House of Commons by Mr. Thurtle, it says that much of the existing law "depends on Acts so ancient that you might not understand their antique wording," and gives an example from an Act several hundred years old. The note finishes with the remark, "Mind, the Bill won't allow you to use loud words at sherry parties, but it will at least save you from arrest if you make pert remarks that nobody has mentioned for the past four hundred years."

The intention of the writer is obvious. It is to give the impression that Mr. Thurtle's Bill deals only with very ancient matters, and has little or no reference to the present times. This is far from being the case. There is only one statute law of blasphemy, and that has never been put into operation. Blasphemy prosecutions have always taken place under the Common Law, and that, instead of being a very ancient law is right up to date. Every now and then prosecutions occur, and as it is left for a Christian jury to say whether a Freethinker has criticized Christianity in a seemly manner, the result may be foreseen. The only check on the workings of the Common Law of Blasphemy is public opinion, and that is an uncertain quantity at most, and bearing in mind the retrogressive legislation of the present Government, the sooner these Acts are cleared from the Statute, and the Common Law of Blasphemy definitely wiped out the better for British freedom.

And there is a danger about the existing Common Law of Blasphemy that is always with us. The more liberal legal interpretation is due to changed public temper. But the Common Law may move forward or backward, and a change backward—not an unknown thing in the Europe of to-day, might easily bring questions of morals, marriage, divorce, etc., within the compass of the legal blasphemy. Bills advocating the prevention of irreligious teaching to young people are brought before Parliament year after year, and in a spasm of retrogression might easily become part of the law. And it is certain that if men such as the Archbishop of Canterbury had their way this would certainly be done. The modern newspaper writer appears to be singularly ill-informed. That is because so much of his work, perhaps the majority of it, consists in writing "smart" paragraphs, and avoiding the law of libel.

The *Greenock Telegraph* publishes a letter from a correspondent protesting against the placing in the reading-room of the public library a copy of the *Freethinker*. He thinks all the denominations of Greenock will wish its removal. We do not doubt that is true of the majority of members of the local Christian sects, but that does not affect the real issue. The business of the public library should be to make accessible to its public all kinds of literature, and if papers are displayed in a reading-room, journals which represent all types of opinion. We are glad to learn that the *Freethinker* is in the reading-room

of the Greenock public library, we hope that Freethinkers will see to it that it is kept there. But whether it is there or not will not seriously affect the growth of the Freethought movement. That has developed in the face of much more serious opposition than the bigotry of certain people in Greenock is able to offer.

The writer of the letter refers to the "poisonous influence" of the *Freethinker*. The description is complimentary and accurate. Where Christianity, cant, humbug, and intolerance are concerned it is the most poisonous influence, in the shape of a weekly paper, that exists in this country. We hope the *Freethinker* will always deserve that description at the hands of such men as the writer of the letter we have noted. That the letter was meant to insult is really a compliment.

Over a large part of Canada the Roman Church exercises great power, and where the interests of the Roman Church are concerned almost anything is possible. It appears, according to a statement made by Premier Duplessis before the Legislative Assembly, that he had been invited to meet Cardinal Villeneuve for the purpose of discussing measures to combat Communism. The Premier said the Cardinal was "one of the glories of the Catholic Church in Canada," and it was when he met this "glory of the Church" that it was determined to stop the propaganda of "Communism and Bolshevism." The result was the introduction of a measure which makes it illegal anywhere within the province of Quebec to propagate Communism or Bolshevism by any means whatsoever. No house must be used for the purpose of discussing Communism. No newspaper or book may publish matter "propagating or tending to propagate Communism," and any police officer may enter any house where he believes such propaganda is carried on.

A full report of the discussion of the Bill is to be found in the *Montreal Star* for March 18. So much for freedom of opinion under the British flag and where the Roman Church exerts power. It is rather curious that no mention of this measure appears to have been printed in the British Press. If it has, it has escaped our notice. The Bill has passed its third reading and now awaits the decision of the Legislative Council. A measure of this kind, with its opportunities for oppression and exhibition of religious bigotry is a disgrace to the British Empire. Political and social opinions should be fought by methods other than those wielded by the Roman Church through its political tools.

The following story we can vouch for. One of our friends and supporters arrived at one of the towns of the Riviera, with the intention of staying there a few months. He called upon the consul and told him he wished to become acquainted with a few English people. "You should attend the Church of England services," he was told. When he replied that he did not care to do that, he was advised to call and see the Reverend Gentleman at his residence. "But I am not a Christian," our friend expostulated. "Neither is he," was the prompt reply.

Reuter reports from New Zealand the death of Rua, a Maori "prophet." Rua did not attain the patriarchal age of biblical brethren—dying at 68, and from tuberculosis—but he had "studied the Bible" with profit. He "married" twelve wives, had seventy children, traded and banked for his people—taking ten per cent of their earnings in true priestly fashion—and was only stopped from sousing "his people" in liquor by the intervention of the Government:—

Rua declared he could "walk on the face of the sea," and led his disciples down to the shore of Ohiwa Harbour. At the water's edge he turned and asked: "Do you believe that I can walk on the water?"

There was a universal cry of assent.

"Well," said Rua, "if you all believe, there is no need for me to do it," and marched them back home.

The Maoris expected that Rua would rise from the dead three days after his death. They have been disappointed.

On Genesis

II.

It is very instructive to read what Dr. T. K. Cheyne has to say on the first book of Moses and some of the questions it raises, in the *Encyclopedia Biblica*. This work, mostly written by orthodox Christians, or writers who call themselves orthodox, that is, they still subscribe themselves Churchmen is a sort of half-way house to Rationalism. The conclusions many of them come to with regard to the authenticity and credibility of the Bible are very little removed from those of advanced Freethinkers. But what they say is buried in four large volumes, printed in very small type and expressed with all the learning, deference to authorities, and voluminous footnotes, they can muster. The result is that the man-in-the-street simply cannot be bothered to delve deeply into them; but the very religious and the Fundamentalist would be horrified if they knew to what heretical conclusions some of the clerical contributors have come.

Dr. Cheyne himself soon found, for example, it was not much use going to the ultra-Protestant or Catholic handbooks for genuine criticism and commentary. When he deals with Paradise, he is obliged to say:—

Sound critical method requires us to begin by ascertaining the form or forms of Hebrew tradition, and in order to do so we must examine the classical passages respecting Paradise in Ezekiel and in Genesis . . . and here as elsewhere the amount of reference to modern scholars and investigators is no measure of our obligations to them for stimulus and instruction. It has been necessary however to do all the critical work afresh from the first. A mere register of what is stated in books is not illuminative; in a continually advancing study we cannot be bound by authorities.

All of which means that most of the large number of theological works written by highly respectable but pious writers before Dr. Cheyne, were so much waste paper.

The Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch is, of course, the great bone of contention; and it is amusing to find that many of the writers who maintain it actually believe that, if only it could be proved beyond the shadow of doubt that Moses was the inspired author, the credibility of the stories in Genesis would be unquestioned. Why Moses or anybody else should be accepted as an authority for perfectly ridiculous stories—like the talking serpent in the Garden of Eden, for instance, or the fabulous ages of the Patriarchs—is never made clear; that is, unless calling Moses "inspired" makes it clear. Bishop Colenso seems to have been greatly worried over the whole matter. He was obliged, through common sense as well as through his keen analysis of the Pentateuch, to come to the conclusion that "the Pentateuch as a whole was not written by Moses, and with respect to some, at least, of the chief portions, it cannot be regarded as historically true. It does not on that account cease to contain the true word of God." The last sentence surely was a sop to the orthodox—or perhaps it was the final remnant of his pious unbringing remaining to be shed. But other more or less orthodox commentators found themselves in the same boat. Prof. Kuenen says: "Some narratives of the Pentateuch manifestly do not proceed from one and the same hand, but have been compiled out of different documents or records, which related probably the same fact, but not exactly in the same manner." But "manifestly" is by no means accepted by the very

religious. They are obliged to deny, on the rock of "inspiration," that anybody else but Moses wrote the Pentateuch. Bishop Cotterill, in the *Pulpit Commentary*, says: "Of course, this does not imply either that Moses did not make use of more ancient documents, or that the book was not revised by Ezra or others who had authority." The way the phrase "who had authority" slips in here is quite Christian. What is exactly meant by the words? Does it mean that a priest who got his job either through heredity, that is because he was the son of a Levite, or because he passed some examination on the subject from papers given to him by some other "authority," was in a position to declare without equivocation that such and such an incident was absolutely true? How could he possibly know, from any old documents, that something took place beyond the shadow of doubt, two or three thousand years previously?

Another writer, Dr. Skinner, in his *Commentary to Genesis* says:—

The strongest evidence of the Non-Israelite origin of the story of the Fall is furnished by the Biblical account itself, in the many mythological conceptions, of which traces still remain in *Genesis*.

So that ought to settle the question about the Fall, but has it? Why, our religious journals speak about it as if there was no doubt of any kind that it took place actually as narrated. How, indeed, could there have been a Saviour otherwise? A Saviour for a mythical Fall is too absurd to discuss; and as Jesus certainly died to save man, man must have sinned; and God inspired Moses to write down all about the sin—and there you are! How beautifully it has all been arranged by God Almighty; or as the *Pulpit Commentary* puts it:—

Genesis is the inspired original of which heathen creation stories are the corrupted tradition; impartial reason and honest criticism alike forbid its relegation to a common category with them. Since then, it is neither history, nor science, nor mythology, it must be Revelation.

And our difficulty now is to find out, if Genesis is neither history, myth nor science, what is meant by revelation?

Whatever the answer to this may be, many modern critics are now in accord on one fact: that is, that the Pentateuch is a very composite document, written by various writers, whose style and ideas can be ascertained and have been ascertained. There is a Priestly source, a Jehovistic and an Elohist writer, and editors who combine sympathies for both sides. In Genesis, the Priestly writer is about one third as long as the Jehovistic, and three-fifths as long as the Elohist; and the task of the modern critic is to find out which is which. If the reader is ready to bow down to people who call themselves expert authorities on the question, then he is bound to accept their conclusions. If not he can think what he likes. At all events, there is a considerable body of opinion in opposition; and it must be confessed that some of the so-called proof is nothing but conjecture.

The truth is, the absence of all documents showing how Genesis was compiled makes criticism very difficult. How and when it was written is quite unknown. How did it come to be written in the square Hebrew characters of the manuscript copies? What was the language it was written in before? How and from what documents was the Septuagint translated? And even if positive answers to these questions could be found, how would they prove historical accuracy to any portion of the narratives?

In the article in the *Encyclopedia Biblica*, Dr. Cheyne spends most of his time discussing the Jehovistic and Elohist sources of Genesis, but he leaves almost all the difficulties in the air, so to speak. And he leaves the question of "inspiration" untouched—a rather remarkable omission from a Christian divine. All he seems concerned with is the literary problem of authorship.

And he leaves it to the Rev. O. C. Whitehouse to tell us about the Garden of Eden in which the Fall of Man occurred. This gentleman concluded that it is "a Palestinian narrative, apparently based on an ancient tradition of Babylonian origin which had survived for several centuries at least on Canaanite soil, and then had been remoulded."

On this remoulded tradition the great Christian religion with its doctrine of the Fall of Man, and the Saviourship of Jesus, is based. It is preached as true in hundreds of thousands of churches all over the world. The vast hierarchies of the Church of Rome and the Church of England, together with the hundreds of smaller ones which have departed somewhat from the original source, all teach as absolutely true something which derives from an ancient Babylonian tradition, remoulded on Palestinian soil. What a tribute to the progress of man's intellect in modern times!

H. CUTNER.

Bruno and Christianity

(Concluded from page 251)

IN Bruno the rebellion against Christianity came to a head; it achieved a definiteness that it did not find again till the days preceding the French Revolution. The following quotations will make clear beyond argument that Bruno had rejected every atom of Christianity, and did not even have any "reverence" whatever left for any aspect of it or even for the cult-figure of Jesus himself. Mocenigo said that Bruno had called Christ a worthless rogue (*triste*); and here again we see a curious resemblance to Marlowe who, according to the information laid against him, had declared Christ to be only a charlatan with very low morals.

In the *Expulsion* Bruno says "our professors of a sham religion cry that we ought to glory in I know not what Cabalistic Tragedy." In the *Sigillus* he had mocked at the crudity of the sacraments; and in the *Expulsion* he jeers that the new evangelists had "found better bread, better flesh and wine than that of the Saone, Candy or Nola." That his scorn for the sacraments did not change is shown by his remark, a couple of years later, in *De Immenso*, that he could not discover the Divine Splendour in "I know not what kind of material." In the Dedication of the *Articuli Contra Mathematicos* he expressed his deepest self, affirming that if only the Catholic Church would cease insisting on incomprehensible and self-contradictory dogma it might yet unite the world in a common human aspiration and effort on the simple and rational basis of the rule of co-operation. Nothing was more vile than to cast bones of contention before an ignorant world. In his Latin poem he declares that the meaning of life gleams better in the cosmos of reality than in "gloomy mysteries of modern necromants."

In the *Expulsion* he introduces Chiron the Centaur in order to ridicule Christian ideas of personality and the dogma of the trinity. Chiron, half-man and half-horse, is an emblem of Christ with his dual nature.

Momus, in the story, mocks at Chiron as a being "in which one person is made up of Two Natures, and two substances concur in one hypostatical union." The reply of Jupiter is a mixture of irony directed against theological mysteries and of confused humanism; Bruno, living in the days when the populace were politically immature and incapable of assuming a decisive control of society, accepted the conventional notion that religion was needed as a drug, a source of moral repression for those who would become dangerously disordered without it.

Momus, Momus, the mystery of this thing is great and occult, and you cannot comprehend it; and therefore you ought only to believe it as a thing too high and great for you. . . . You should not desire to know more than is necessary to be known; and believe me, it is not necessary to know this. . . .

Chiron, being a most just man . . . healing the sick, teaching the way how to mount up to the stars. I judge him most worthy, because in this heavenly Temple, at the altar where he assists, there is no other priest but himself, whom you see with a beast in his hand ready to be offered up and a libation-bottle hanging at his girdle; and because an altar, a chapel, and an oratory are necessary. . . . Therefore let him eternally continue, if Fate has not otherwise decreed.

We must also remember that daring as Bruno was he had to pull himself up with reservations when he came too close to matters that were sure to cause offence. It is noteworthy that here, after making his placation, he ends with the supposition that religion in general, and Christianity in particular, may lose its "efficaciousness" some day. The vague rationalization of Jesus as a healer and teacher in the above passage must be read in conjunction with the passages where Bruno speaks with utmost scorn of comparing a few trivial "miracles" in the healing line with genuine social achievements.

He jeers at the "priests of Diana," who cling to superstition and exalt their mysterious functions. Whatever good religion does in keeping the lower classes in their place is too dearly bought if these priests are to have their way.³ He expresses disbelief in a universal deluge, in the recent creation of man, or in the descent of the human race from Adam. (Da Vinci had also said of this last, that it was very improbable). If the Adam story were correct, says Bruno, the creation of man must have resulted from some miracle like that of Jonah's voyage:—

a handsome way of transporting men by some blast of wind or some passage of whales, that have swallowed persons in one country and gone to spew them alive in other parts and upon other continents.

Such miracles are patently absurd, as are those attributed to the saints or to Christ. Bruno's Momus says that Orion (Christ) "who can walk upon the waves of the sea without sinking or wetting his feet; and consequently can do a great many other pretty tricks," shall be sent among men,

and let us order him to teach everything which he pleases, making them believe black is white, and that human understanding, when it thinks it sees best, is mere blindness, and that what appears to Reason good, excellent and choice is base, wicked, and extremely evil; that Nature is a whorish baggage, that Natural Law is knavery, that Nature and the Divine cannot concur to the same good end; that the justice of the one is not subordinate to the justice of the other, but are as things as contrary to one another as light is to darkness; that the entire Divinity is Mother of the Greeks (*Christians*) and is like a hard stepmother to all other generations,

³ Spaccio III., iii.

whence none can be acceptable to the Gods but by becoming Greeks. For the greatest Russian or Poltroon who lived in Greece (i.e., *was a Christian*), as being allied to the generation of the Gods, is incomparably better than the most just and magnanimous who could come from Rome (*the world of social activity*) . . . however preferable in manners, sciences, valour, judgment, beauty and authority; because these are natural gifts and therefore despised by the Gods, and left to those who are not capable of greater privileges: that is, those supernatural ones which Divinity gives, such as dancing on the waters, making lobsters sing ballads, cripples cut capers, and moles see without spectacles, and such other fine gallantries without number. Let them persuade withal, that all philosophy, all contemplation and all magic, which may make them like us, is nothing but bagatelle; that all heroic acts are nothing but knight-errantry; that ignorance is the finest science in the world, because it is acquired without labour and pains, and keeps the mind free from melancholy.

The marvels which Bruno here says that religious "contact with the divine" can produce are all to be found in the *Acta Sanctorum*. He shows always the utmost contempt for the Saints,⁴ says that in them men have worshipped creatures infamous, imbecile, vituperative, fanatical, dishonoured. He criticizes sharply the adoration of relics, the idleness and greed of the clergy, the pedantic uselessness of theologians, the despotism of the higher clergy. Towards the end of the *Expulsion* he brings in the train of the Bear, who advances majestically in a chariot drawn by swine—an obvious parody of the passage in the *Purgatorio*, where Dante symbolizes the triumph of the Church; doubtless also with a memory of the gadarene swine filled with devils. He continually describes the Papacy as a tyrannical and horrible monstrosity,⁵ a tiaraed and mitred beast with gems on its ass-hooves, surrounded by the faith of the Fathers, papal bulls, and little images; the tyberine beast of violent tyranny; "armed in strength with keys and sword, fraud and violence, hypocrisy and ferocity. . . ."

After these outbursts we can fully credit the blasphemies and attacks on the clergy that Mocenigo alleged Bruno had made in his presence.⁶

But the mere rebellion is not significant without the thesis of social action that Bruno wished to put in place of the distracting and debasing influence of established religion.

JACK LINDSAY.

⁴ Edition Wagner, II., 129, 234-5; Lagarda 427-8, 538-40; Gentile, 33, 187-8.

⁵ De Immenso VIII., I, Oratio Valedictoria. Oratio consolatoria.

⁶ Here are some more passages of his against Christianity. "Give a blow," says his Jupiter, "to all prophets, diviners, fortune-tellers and prognosticators, and all such as traverse and run about to spoil my progress" (that is, to interfere with "nature" and true social activity). He laughs at "altars and statues erected to certain persons whom I am ashamed to name because they are worse than our satyrs, fauns, and other half-beasts, viler even than the crocodiles of Egypt."

And he writes of the Sacrament of the Mass: "Senseless and foolish idolaters . . . who look for divinity without any manner of reason in the excrements of dead and inanimate things. . . . And what is worse than all this, they triumph for joy to see their own foolish rites in so much reputation, and those of others vanished and annulled." He has been speaking of the superiority of ancient Egyptian religion (for its symbolisms of natural process) to Christianity. *Expulsion* III.

I hold the moral responsibility of providing for old age, helpless infancy, and poverty is far superior to that of supplying the wants of courtly extravagance, ambition, and intrigue.—Thomas Paine.

Nature Notes of a Freethinker

"These, marching softly, thus in order went;
And after them the Monthes all riding came.
First sturdy March, with brows full sternly bent
And armed strongly, rode upon a Ram,
The same which over Hellespontus swam;
Yet in his hand a spade he also bent,
And in a bag all sorts of seeds ysame,
Which on the earth he strowed as he went,
And fild her wombe with fruitfull hope of nourishment."

Spenser.

Pope wrote somewhere of the poet's poet, "There is something in Spenser that pleases one as strongly in one's old age as it did in one's youth. I read the *Fairie Queene* when I was about twelve with a vast deal of delight, and I think it gave me as much when I read it about a year or two ago." In writing these notes, Spenser had to be revisited, and my underlinings of twenty-three years ago revived a past pleasure in one who wrote copiously and harmoniously. The opening of Canto II. has the charm of sweetness together with the fact of a scientist, and the following two lines about the Pole Star may send a reader to the original:—

"... But furme is fixt, and sendeth light from farre
To al that in the wide deepe wandring arre; . . ."

The sky at night, when clear, is singularly beautiful in the month of March; Venus shines serenely, and is so brilliant that light clouds cannot eclipse her beauty; the passing veil only shows her intensity more powerfully when compared with other lamps of the night. Late in the evening when only the owl can be heard intermittently there is a peculiar pleasure in surveying the sky; under these same stars and planets the unending drama of mankind has taken place. Fools and wise men have looked up to them, and they have answered not a single question to the myriad of interrogations. Awe-stricken Pascal, enquiring Galileo, sceptical Maeterlinck; the terrific beauty of the stars remain, and I as a nature lover shall enjoy them as long as sight lasts, with Flammarion for a friend, and first causes as a conundrum for those who have no interest in the art of living.

She was an old woman, rather short in stature, with twinkling grey eyes, and rosy cheeks. A basket of lavender was on her arm, and as I went by I spoke a word or two of Romany to her. This made us friends at once. "Where's that boy of mine?" She asked, looking up and down the road. "I tell him," she confided, "that he was born on Daddy's Common, but he don't know what it means." I suppose there is something *closer* than close to nature; if it is so, then gypsies live closer to nature than those who live close to nature. In the March rains that shut out the sky and are continuous rods of thin ice, a caravan can be seen in a flat field; it is near to a thick hedge which partly breaks the force of the west wind deluge. There dwells another gypsy woman with her husband, two children and a dog. The woman makes calls on houses with clothes-pegs which nobody wants, and with rush mats she can't sell. She is a beautiful woman with dark luminous eyes, finely spun black hair, good features and in possession of a well-developed body. Bitterly cold weather prevailed, and as she had a cup of tea by the fire she recounted the story of her husband's illness, of their difficulty in making a living; on washing-day, to quote the gay, frank and shameless daughter of Romany "they had neither a shirt nor a shimmy between them." Borrow makes out a good case for these free sons and daughters of earth, who refuse to be civilised with our own particular and doubtful brand. In *The Romany Rye* there is a laughable conversation between the author and Jasper the gypsy; a slight extract here gives a good idea of the apparent honesty of Borrow's writing:—

"We are not miserable, brother."

"Well, then, you ought to be, Jasper. Have you an inch of ground of your own? Are you of the least use? Are you not spoken ill of by everybody? What's a gypsy?"

"What's the bird noising yonder, brother?"

"The bird! Oh, that's the cuckoo tolling; but what has the cuckoo to do with the matter?"

"We'll see, brother; what's the cuckoo?"

"What is it? You know as much about it as myself, Jasper."

"Isn't it a kind of roguish, chaffing bird, brother?"

"I believe it is, Jasper."

"Nobody knows whence it comes, brother?"

"I believe not, Jasper."

"Very poor, brother, not a nest of its own?"

"So they say, Jasper."

"With every person's bad word, brother?"

"Yes, Jasper, every person is mocking it."

"Tolerably merry, brother?"

"Yes, tolerably merry, Jasper."

"Of no use at all, brother?"

"None whatever, Jasper."

"You would be glad to get rid of the cuckoo, brother?"

"Why not exactly, Jasper; the cuckoo is a pleasant, funny bird, and its presence and voice give a great charm to the green trees and fields; no, I can't say I wish exactly to get rid of the cuckoo."

"Well, brother, what's a Romany chal?"

"You must answer that question yourself, Jasper."

"A roguish, chaffing fellow, a'n't he, brother?"

"Ay, ay, Jasper."

"Of no use at all, brother?"

"Just so, Jasper; I see . . ."

"Something very much like a cuckoo, brother?"

"I see what you are after, Jasper."

"You would like to get rid of us, wouldn't you?"

"Why, no, not exactly."

"Yes, Jasper, but there is some difference between men and cuckoos; men have souls, Jasper!"

"And why not cuckoos, brother?"

"You should not talk so, Jasper; what you say is little short of blasphemy. How should a bird have a soul?"

"And how should a man?"

"Oh, we know very well that a man has a soul."

"How do you know it?"

"We know very well."

"Would you take your oath of it, brother—your bodily oath?"

"Why, I think I might, Jasper!"

"Did you ever see the soul, brother?"

"No, I never saw it."

"Then how could you swear to it? A pretty figure you would make in a court of justice, to swear to a thing which you never saw."

The five senses are capable of being individually impressed with something new or novel; the touch of a living bamboo cane is peculiar—the stem feels cold and smooth, and yet it is alive. Some hundreds of wood pigeons flew overhead and the vibration of their wings, so many of them, was a new sound to my ear; it was different even from the sound of a flock of starlings returning city-wards from their feeding-ground. For the eye, wild bird-life makes continuously fresh pictures. On a wintry day, gloomy with the drizzle of rain, a wonderful picture leapt to the sight over an olive green pasture. A flock of lapwings, whose name describes their flight, was rising and falling, and black and white, alive with the intensity of most bird-life, over the field, through the misty rain, made a pleasant and memorable picture. To see a lapwing tumble in the air gives the impression that it is trying to dash its brains out; it is more swift and skilful than the dive and fall of rooks returning to their roosting quarters. Of the lapwing's or peewit's cry, Mr. W. J. Brown, in his book, *The Gods had Wings*, has an interesting story. According to a Swedish tale this bird stole the Virgin Mary's scissors; in remorse they were returned, but the call of "Tyvit, Tyvit," means, in Swedish language, "I stole them, I stole them." This, of course, is fanciful. In the Midland counties, part of the thrush's song is translated as "Work a dee" (work a day) and "Plee a wik" (Play a week). This seems fairly reasonable advice. I will leave readers to find any connexion they please between the thrush's Midland dialect and an extract from the speech of Major Douglas at Newcastle: "It is not the prime object of existence to find employment. I have no intention of being dogmatic as to what is the prime object of existence, but I am entirely confident that it is not comprised in the endless pursuit of turning this originally very beautiful world in which we live into slag-heaps, blast-furnaces, guns and battle-ships."

NICHOLAS MERE.

Correspondence

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND THE N.U.T.

SIR,—As a reader of your paper for half a century may I be allowed to traverse some of the statements in your leading article of April 11. You state that the decision of the N.U.T. to give fullest support to the Blackpool Teachers in their refusal to go to places of worship in school time as part of their school duty, was taken at a private session, "and that is *not* so good." And you go on to say, "there does not seem to be any reason for a private session save the fear that teachers have generally of being victimized if they offend their religious masters in Church and Chapel and on the Education Committee." The teachers concerned had already refused to obey the Blackpool Committee's orders as being *ultra vires* and so no further victimization was to be feared; and the fight had to be made on a point of *right* in law. Now the N.U.T. representing all types of Teachers is a *professional* organization and not a religious or anti-religious one. It found the Education Act of 1870—with religious instruction (permitted by law) in the schools: and its function has been within the law to protect the Teacher against oppression, whether by Church or Chapel or Education Committee, or all three combined. So when a case of *illegal* action arises the N.U.T. defends its members—and when Conference sits it confirms or rejects the interim action of its Executive. And where its policy may land it in a big struggle it naturally has its discussion in private, and promulgates its decision when made. Has the N.S.S. at its Annual Conference no private sessions? And if it had a difficult tenancy case, would it invite all the world to the discussion of its policy, or would it consider the matter in private first and then make public its decision?

"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."

But the issue at Portsmouth was not a *religious* issue. It was a *legal* issue. Have the Committee the power to demand that Teachers shall give religious instruction outside of *school* premises in buildings devoted to religion? And 300 Blackpool Teachers have said NO! and the N.U.T. has decided publicly to support them to the full extent of their £1,500,000 Sustentation Fund, and even to the making of a levy on their members, if necessary.

It is a bad policy on your part when the N.U.T. are fighting for the *civic* rights of teachers to say they are afraid to discuss publicly—an irrelevant issue—a religious one.

And as one who was present merely as a member of the N.U.T. and not as a delegate, I can inform you that the unanimous decision to support the Blackpool Teachers was proposed by an Ex-President of the N.U.T., seconded by another Ex-President, supported by a *denominational* Teacher, whose Association has a membership comprising two Denominational School Teachers to every one Council Teacher; and was further supported by an Ex-President who is Vice-Chairman of a large Diocesan Conference. May I reiterate, the N.U.T. is a professional organization, and its one entry to membership is that the applicant shall be a Qualified Teacher. They do not ask his religion or his negation of it. Here lies the strength of the N.U.T., for it admits on *equal* terms men and women; heads and assistants; Elementary, Secondary, Technical and University Teachers. "Educationalists should be before all things reformers, and reformers should be of sterner stuff than this policy of the N.U.T. indicates." This contains a whole bundle of debatable "statements." The great mass of teachers can at best be expositors of *agreed* topics.

There must be an agreed syllabus, and a settled timetable; and the teacher, under an authority can only be a reformer in *methods*. He must satisfy his employer (the Committee), and the Board of Education that his *results* are good; but they between them decide the scope of his activities; and if he fails to satisfy his employers he is given due notice to quit. So that a Head Teacher is not "the master of his school," and you would not agree to

his being master if he taught your child religion against your wishes and rights. The Teacher is a public servant, and his school activities are largely determined by law. And the N.U.T. wisely knows nothing of the religious views of its members—but only their *legal* rights and duties.

DOMINIE.

P.S.—May I add that the question of "Secular Education" was debated at the N.U.T. Conference some three years ago, and the discussion reported in the N.U.T. organ the *Schoolmaster*.

[We regret that this letter reached us too late for insertion in last week's issue. Mr. Cohen replies to "Dominie's" criticism in his "Views and Opinions" in this week's issue.—EDITOR.]

National Secular Society

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD APRIL 15, 1937

The President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, in the chair.

Also present: Messrs. Hornibrook, Clifton, Wood, Saphin, Tuson, Silvester, Easterbrook, Ebury, Preced, Sandys, Elstob, Mrs. Grant, and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and accepted. Monthly financial statement presented. New members were admitted to Burnley, Birmingham, Kingston-on-Thames, Glasgow, Bradford, Liverpool, Nelson, Preston, Chester-le-Street, South London Branches, and the Parent Society. Correspondence from Birkenhead, Bradford and Bethnal Green Branches was dealt with.

The Secretary reported that the plan of Mr. G. Whitehead's Summer Lecture Tour had been completed. The Annual Balance Sheet was before the meeting, a number of questions were asked and answered, after which a motion for its acceptance was put and carried.

The Agenda of the Annual Conference appears in the *Freethinker* dated April 18. Details in connexion with the Conference were announced, and it was agreed that the present meeting be the last of the old Executive.

The proceedings then closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,

General Secretary.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON

INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): S. K. Ratcliffe—"The New Problem of Loyalty."

OUTDOOR

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Highbury Corner): 8.0, Saturday, Mr. L. Ebury. Hampstead, White Stone Pond, 11.30, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury. Parliament Hill Fields, 3.30, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury. South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Monday, Mr. L. Ebury. Mornington Crescent, Camden Town, 8.0, Wednesday, Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.30, Sunday, Messrs. Bryant, Barnes and Ryans. 6.30, Messrs. Bryant, Barnes and Tuson. Thursday, 7.30, Messrs. Saphin, Bryant, Tuson and others. The *Freethinker*, Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason*, and Chapman Cohen's latest pamphlets may be had outside Park Gates, close to Marble Arch Tube Station.

COUNTRY

INDOOR

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (King's Cafe, Oxford Street, Manchester): 7.0, Annual General Meeting.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Green Street): 7.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

TEES SIDE BRANCH (Jubilee Hall, Leeds Street, Stockton-on-Tees): 7.30, H. Dalkin—"Modern Religious Apologetics."

(Continued on page 271)

The Book That Shook The Churches

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(Continued from page 270)

OUTDOOR

- ACCRINGTON MARKET : 7.0, Sunday, April 25, Mr. J. Clayton.
- BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place) : 7.0, Mr. J. Clayton—"Christianity: Ancient and Modern." Literature on sale. If wet—in Cobden Hall, 14 Cort Street.
- BLXTH (Market Place) : 7.0, Monday, April 26, Mr. J. T. Brighton.
- CHESTER-LE-STREET (Bridge End) : 8.0, Friday, April 23, Mr. J. T. Brighton.
- COLNE (Vivary Bridge) : 7.3, Wednesday, April 28, Mr. J. Clayton.
- HETTON (Colliery Hotel Corner) : 7.0, Wednesday, April 28, Mr. J. T. Brighton.
- HUNCOAT : 7.30, Monday, April 26, Mr. J. Clayton.
- LOWERHOUSE : 7.30, Friday, April 23, Mr. J. Clayton.
- MIDDLESBROUGH (Bedford Street) : 7.30, Wednesday, April 28, Mr. H. Dalkin.
- STOCKTON (Market Cross) : 7.0, Monday, April 26, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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