

THE  
FREETHINKER

• EDITED by CHAPMAN COHEN •  
— Founded 1881 —

Vol. LVII.—No. 26

SUNDAY, JUNE 27, 1937

PRICE THREEPENCE

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Views and Opinions

God's Blunders

SOME years ago a show of the Barnum variety had for one of its exhibits a collection of what are usually called "freaks." But in this instance, with a dash of originality that amounted almost to genius, the owner labelled his exhibits, "God's blunders." The description was denounced in religious quarters as "blasphemous"—which offered *prima facie* evidence that it was correct. It is not usual to get philosophy in a travelling circus, but there is really no cause for surprise at its being there; for philosophy, real philosophy, is not made up, as unwise people imagine, of abstruse things that it takes years of hard mental labour to understand. Philosophy comes from life, and the facts of life are mostly simple. But many mistake foolery for philosophy, although the philosopher is never a fool, even though many fools may consider themselves philosophers, and parade folly as their chief claim to notoriety.

It was complained that in calling these exhibits "God's blunders," the proprietor of the exhibition was guilty of irreverence. Why? If, as orthodox theology says, there is a plan running through the universe, if never a sparrow falls to the ground without the knowledge of "our Father," God must be equally aware of a woman with bushy whiskers, of living skeletons, and boneless wonders. After all, if freaks happen without the knowledge and design of God, so may normalities. We ought to aim at being consistent, even in our religious stupidities. If abnormalities were common, they would be—just normal. No one pauses to turn his head when a normal man passes, but a two-headed man coming down Oxford Street would require a police escort to enable him to get along, and thousands would pay a shilling to see him. I think that believers have been dull in not parading "Freaks" as evidence of God's handiwork. They might well argue that no man in his senses would deliberately make such objects. And we all know the force of the religious argument that, as man

cannot make life in the laboratory, therefore it must come from God.

\* \* \*

How God Works

Let us take a striking example of a recent blunder of God. A little while ago the papers contained an account of the way in which a Durham parson had, in defiance of his godly superiors, travelled to France to say prayers over the marriage of Edward VIII. After his return home he explained that he did so because he was a tool in the hands of God. The Archbishop of Canterbury and Mr. Baldwin had agreed that no religious service should be said over the marriage. But the Durham parson explained that God had his eye on things, and in a sermon delivered in his own church, on June 6, he explained the matter:—

The wheels of Providence were moving, and I, an unknown parson, a simple town parson, was destined by Almighty God to perform the simple ceremony. The hand of God began to move very, very slowly through a scrap of paper I have now in my hand, with the astonishing headline, "No Religious Ceremony for the Duke of Windsor." From that moment I became in the hands of God just a simple channel through which God's will could be done. . . . All the powers of hell could not stop that wheel from turning and turning [one good turn deserves another] until He commanded them to stop.

On the face of it this looks as good a case for design in nature as any I have come across. In days of old, God might have sent one of his angelic messenger boys to the parson, as he did in the case of Balaam and his donkey, and in the instance of the birth of Jesus. But to-day there is the press, and little did the writer of the paragraph cited, the "comp," as he pressed the keys of his linotype, the newsagent who sold to Mr. Jardine the copy of the paper, or the readers of that issue of the paper know that God was using them as a kind of "agony column" advertisement, all combining to secure a marriage service for the Duke of Windsor, in spite of the combination of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Durham.

But the blunder? Consider! The Archbishop of Canterbury had been called by God to his post, so had the Bishop of Durham—the Prime Ministers who had appointed them were mere instruments in the hand of God. Indeed, the Archbishop has said that he is the mouthpiece of God to the English people, (the rest of the world can go to hell) and the Bishop of Durham believes he is another mouthpiece. Now God who knows when a sparrow falls earthward ought to have known the kind of men he was calling to the job, and it is not playing the game to appoint one man to a post, and when he is attending to his business connive, via the cheap press, to let another person get in the way. God gave no open signs of his displeasure. He did not strike the Archbishop

dead or blind. The Archbishop appears to have had a lively time since he acted as he did, and the man who worked with him actually received an earldom. It looks like another of God's blunders. Either the first man God appointed let him down, or the second should have been prevented interfering with the "will of God." It is enough to make one question whether the Archbishop is really God's mouthpiece, although I admit that the evidence for God's action in his appointment is as good as any I have come across. But if there is a plan of creation God ought to make up his mind as to what he wants and see that he gets it.

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#### God's Englishman

But the blunder is, after all, typical of God's management. Mr. George Lansbury has explained that, according to God's design, the earth was intended for the people. The "people" he made were and are quite willing to have it. But after God made the land for all the people, he also made a number of others who took care that *they* should have the lion's share of it. God made men who should love one another and live in continuous peace. But then he gave men the kind of intelligence and passions that inevitably led them to be continuously at war, and also called into being large numbers of priests who pointed out that making war might be what the author of *1066 and All That* called "a good thing." God gave mankind a special revelation of the truth, and ever since millions of those who accepted it have been quarrelling about what the devil it meant. In short, he never appears to have done a single thing without doing something of an entirely opposite kind. He is like a shipbuilder who in every vessel he builds conceals a time bomb that will blow it to pieces. Of course, it is just possible that this "Aristophanes of the sky" is doing what he does out of a sheer freakish humour, that he plays with men as boys do with flies; or that he is, as W. H. Mallock suggested, a heavenly larrikin, kicking his heels in the sky, not intending to do mischief, but not caring whether he does it or not.

Here is another example of "God's blunders," which is given on the authority of Canon Parry-Evans, as reported in the *Northern Echo* for May 5. He says:—

In a perplexed and problem-beset world. . . . God looks down through the storm clouds and seeks for a champion. And, as he turned of old to His Englishman who never failed him yet, so he turned to this land and Empire.

That, again, is a touching reflection. God looking down on the world, wondering what on earth he is to do, and finally deciding that the only person he can trust is His Englishman, who never failed him yet! God has at present some 1,800,000,000 children in the world. He made them all—black and brown, red, white and yellow, with all intermediate shades. But, alas, out of the eighteen hundred million, he finds the only ones he can place any dependence on are "His Englishmen"—and not all of them, for I am sure Canon Parry-Evans does not include *all* Englishmen. But what a blunder to have made so many, and to be able to depend upon so few! It looks as though the only people that God can depend upon are those who lack the wit, the honesty, and the courage to look at God's work as it is, and to understand God for what he is.

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#### Another View

I do not know how many of my readers are acquainted with Mark Twain's *Mysterious Stranger*. I do not think that it has ever been published in this country, if it has not, then it will be for the reason

that the same author's *Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven* has not been published here. Both are frankly "blasphemous," and God's Englishmen are nothing if they are not humbugs where religion is concerned. The mysterious stranger is Satan, and like all who have written of him, he far outdoes God in intelligence. Satan sums up the blunders of God thus:—

A God who could make good children as easily as bad, yet preferred to make bad ones; who could have made every one of them happy, yet never made a single one happy; who made them prize their bitter life, yet stingily cut it short; who gave his angels eternal happiness unearned, yet required his other children to earn it; who gave his angels painless lives, yet cursed his other children with biting miseries and maladies of mind and body; who mouths justice and invented hell—mouths mercy and invented hell—mouths Golden Rules, and Forgiveness multiplied by seventy times seven, and invented hell; who mouths morals to other people and has none himself; who frowns upon crimes, yet commits them all; who created man without invitation, then tries to shuffle the responsibility for man's acts upon man, instead of honourably placing it where it belongs, on himself; and finally, with altogether divine obtuseness, invites this poor debased slave to worship him!

The man to whom Satan is talking claims that humanity has a sense of humour, and Satan replies:—

There spoke the race, always ready to claim what it hasn't got, and mistake the ounce of brass filings for a ton of gold-dust. You have a mongrel perception of humour, nothing more; a multitude possess that. This multitude see the comic side of a thousand low-grade and trivial things. . . . The ten thousand high-grade comicalities which exist in the world are sealed from their dull vision. Will a day come when the race will detect the funniness of these juvenilities and laugh at them—and by laughing at them destroy them? For your race, in its poverty, has unquestionably one effective weapon—laughter. Power, money, persuasion, supplication, persecution—these can lift a colossal humbug—push it a little, weaken it a little, century by century; but only laughter can blow it to rags and atoms at a blast. Against the assault of laughter nothing can stand. You are always fussing and fighting with your other weapons. Do you ever use that one? No; you leave it lying rusting. As a race, do you ever use it at all? No, you lack sense and courage.

I think I will leave it at that. If men learned but to laugh instead of getting no further than a grin, a large part of the world's wrongs would disappear. But when we treat absurdities—religious, ethical, and political—solemnly, we are giving them a continued lease of life. Solemnity is the main instrument with which rogues rule fools.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

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#### VERY MUCH UP-TO-DATE

On May 25, 1932, an early edition of the *Express* included on its front page a description of an Empire Day pageant, organized by the paper and arranged to take place in Hyde Park on May 24. This description was printed under the headings: "Thrilling Climax to Empire Day. Thousands Cheer Historic Scenes."

The Historic scenes were sketched in detail and readers were told how at the end "the slender figure of a girl robed in white, representing Peace, stood enthroned before us in a single beam of white light," and how "we sang as the darkness fell."

In later editions appeared a headline

HYDE PARK PAGEANT CALLED OFF

and a few lines stating that the whole affair had been cancelled.—"Press Parade," *Hamilton Fyfe*.

## Boosting the Bishops

"Priests, who ought to be the poorest, are the richest; who ought to be the most obedient, are the most refractory and rebellious."—*Landor*.

MANY years ago, the *Freethinker* issued a poster with the words, "A Bishop in the Workhouse," which caused a sensation. There was no real occasion, however, for pious alarm, for the account referred to a visit of a Right Reverend Father-in-God to a Poor Law Institution, and not to a sad decline in the social scale of so distinguished a member of the aristocracy. Indeed, bishops have been deposed, imprisoned, murdered, even lynched, but have seldom been "sold-up," as legend says was the fate of the founder of their religion.

That present-day bishops do suffer grievously is the burden of a leading article in the *Daily Herald* (June 7). This is no new complaint, however, for the Bishop of London has assured us all that the longer he draws his £10,000 annually the nearer he gets to bankruptcy. Few need shed tears on his account, for His Lordship still adorns his profession in beautiful barbaric robes costing some £300, which would be a difficult proposition if he were really hard-up and had also to bear the overhead charges of the upkeep of Fulham Palace and a town-house in the West-End of London.

But the pious *Daily Herald* is frankly upset about the martyrdom of the Church of England bishops. Why a Socialist newspaper should take this attitude is passing strange. One would expect a Left-Winger to be more concerned about the disestablishment of the Anglican Church, or disturbed at the sweated wages paid to church vergers and cleaners. Ah! No! The sentimental *Herald* "pities the plumage, but forgets the dying bird." Whether the buttering-up of the episcopate has anything to do with the elevation of the *Herald's* managing-director to the peerage we do not know, but it is a curious coincidence.

"We must speak by the card, or equivocation will undo us." According to the *Herald*, the life of a bishop is a hard one, and full of drudgeries. Even the comfortable episcopal pay-rolls must cause, so the *Herald* tells us, "financial anxiety." A horrible and hair-raising tale is told of a bishop who was seen riding in a tramcar, with his breeches darned! "Bishops' clothes cost much more than ordinary garments," adds the *Herald*. "That very handsome purple evening dress they wear costs at least twice as much as an ordinary tail-coat outfit." And let us add that, as an evening dress suit costs £25 in the gilded throng of society, it follows that the poor dear Fathers-in-God have to spend £50 on clothes to drink delight with their peers at social functions. This is, however, but a fraction of the cost of those glad rags worn by the episcopal showmen at the Coronation celebrations in Westminster Abbey—where afterwards ten shillings was charged to view the empty chairs.

What humbug it all is! The complaint of the poverty of the Anglican Bishops is simply an untruthful exaggeration. The Church of England is the richest and most powerful church in the world. With its tithes, coal-royalties, and ground-rents, it is a perfect example of that form of Capitalism against which Socialism is fighting. Yet the *Herald* suggests that those consecrated charlatans, the bishops, are good men who are being very hardly used in the service of their fellows. Poverty, forsooth! Forty of the older bishops share between them £182,700 annually, with emoluments in the shape of palaces and palatial residences, whilst many of them have seats in the House of Lords. The Archbishop of Canterbury enjoys an income of £15,000 yearly, the Archbishop of York has

£9,000 yearly, and the Bishop of London gets £10,000. The Bishop of Durham, whose see includes some of the most distressed parts of England, has £7,000 annually. There are three hundred of them in all, including colonial, continental, and suffragan bishops. They frequently leave large sums of money when they die. A former Bishop of Colchester left estate of the value of £60,848. Bishop Creighton, who used to moan of the hardships of the ecclesiastics, left £29,500. Archbishop Tait left £35,000, and Archbishop Benson a similar sum. The biggest episcopal estate of late years was that of Bishop Walsham How, who left £72,240. A good second to this was Bishop Tuffnell's £65,000, whilst Bishop Phillpott left £60,000, Archbishop Thomson £55,000, and Bishop Trollope £50,790.

The *Herald* admires the bishops, and appears to labour under the delusion that these survivals from the past spend their lives doing good. Well! the last piece of "good" that these dear bishops did was to vote for flogging children when the House of Commons wished to abolish it. A previous act of "goodness" was to vote against the provision of seats for tired shop-assistants. These good men opposed votes for women, both on Borough Councils and for Parliamentary Elections. In fact, during two thousand years, they have never regarded women as human beings. It was the wicked infidels who insisted on the equality of the sexes, but the *Herald* and its titled managing-director have no admiration, or even common courtesy, for Freethinkers, who are not even supposed to be "good."

The Bishops in the House of Lords, where, of all places, these good men come most closely in touch with the nation, have incurred an amount of hatred which only a perusal of their votes can explain. They were defenders of absolutism, slavery, and a brutal and sanguinary penal code; they were the resolute opponents of every political and social reform through many generations. Throughout the whole of the nineteenth century, and so far in the twentieth century, these godly men, as legislators, have been the despair not only of progressive politicians, but of the plain average citizen. One conception, and one conception only, of their duties as legislators filled the minds of these prelates. They were in the House of Lords to maintain things as they were, and to resist all innovation with might and main. Despite the Scriptural command, "Thou shalt not kill," the Bishops have never lifted their hands or raised voices against militarism! It is not that they like murder on the mass-production scale. It is simply that these "good" men are always on the side of aristocratic authority, and never by any chance on the side of the people. The people, to them, are the under-dogs and must put up with war, just as the farmers must put up with tithes, or the miners bear the burden of coal-royalties.

Why should this dishonest defence of the bishops appear in the columns of a great newspaper? And, above all, in a periodical professing Socialism? One would hardly be surprised to read similar gibberish in a parish magazine. Is it written with the idea of making Socialism appear innocuous and respectable? Or does the writer actually believe the drivel he writes? In either case the editor is open to a charge of insincerity or ignorance. And what of the *Daily Herald* itself? Is it not playing it a little low down on the British working-man thus to take advantage of his ignorance of life and lack of experience? Maybe, when the Education Act has run another half century or so, the readers of general newspapers will cease to hunger for sawdust, and will prefer the bread of knowledge. In sober truth, and not in the cant of journalism, let us wish for the recovery of the *Daily*

*Herald*. There are so many newspapers for whom the inscription, "Died of Christian Humbug" is good, and good enough. But the man who sits in the editorial chair of a newspaper professing to speak for democracy should not be a humble disciple of Samuel Pecksniff. So desperate is the present dilemma, that almost is one persuaded that the chief representative of Socialism in the British daily press has declined upon a period of hypocrisy and commercialism. If Socialism has no better champion than the *Herald*, no wonder reactionaries get into office and stay there. In the very nature of things it cannot be otherwise. To admire and defend a gang of consecrated charlatans, of no more actual importance than African witch-doctors, is not Socialism, nor does it help Socialism. For bishops being but savage survivals from a dark and ignorant past are the worst enemies of Democracy.

MIMNERMUS.

## Humanism in Seventeenth Century England

SEVENTEENTH century England witnessed the presence and progress of that invaluable spirit of inquiry which subsequently culminated in uncompromising Freethought. The bitter recriminations of bigoted Christians, whose several sects were completely intolerant towards those who dissented from their dogmas, led many humane and intellectual men to embrace moderate and latitudinarian opinions. George Wither, John Hales and William Chillingworth were with these, while a more distinctly sceptical attitude was adopted by men like Herrick and Lord Herbert of Cherbury.

In his scholarly work, *The Development of Religious Toleration in England (1603-1640)*, Allen and Unwin, 1936, Dr. W. K. Jordan, the Harvard historian, defines religious rationalism as "that point of view which seeks to interpret the universe in terms of thought, and endeavours to discredit those traditions and principles which will not bear the scrutiny of such examination." That the early pioneers of modern Freethought always attained this ideal cannot be claimed. Yet their outlook was so much more rational and humane than that of their orthodox contemporaries that they rise far above them, both mentally and morally.

Although the Latitudinarians despised intolerance they were deeply religious men, while the Rationalists tended to treat theology and ethics from the standpoint of common-sense Englishmen, who viewed the doctrines of the churches and sectaries as utterly incapable of reasonable proof. Moreover, these innovators were more concerned with secular than sacred matters. Among the educated few, there seems to have been far more scepticism than is usually conceded. Fuller, Charlton and Fletcher all noted this tendency, and the latter in his drama, *The Elder Brother*, declares that:—

"To be of no religion  
Argues a subtle moral understanding,  
And it is often cherished."

Sir John Davies (1560-1626), a sound lawyer and real poet, who ultimately became Lord Chief Justice, was distinctly sceptical. Man, he argues, is instinctively anxious to attain the truth, and this ambition he regards as a permanent attribute of human nature. Dr. Jordan notes that: "Davies's thought was remarkable for its boldness and unorthodoxy. Thus he deplored the regrets which have always been expressed at Adam's fall for it seemed to him that Adam

was inspired by that rational curiosity which constitutes man's highest attribute."

Even in that superstitious age, Davies appears to have become completely emancipated from the current theology. He proclaims the supremacy of pure reason in man's search for truth, while deprecating human reliance on mere authority, tradition, or revelation itself. Persecution, he stigmatized as a brutal and irrational assault upon mental liberty, and Jordan concludes that: "Davies gave to rationalism an inspired and stalwart defence, which would seem to give him a more significant place in English thought than has generally been assigned him."

Other sceptics were Harrington and Overbury, and the latter, in his *Characters*, subjected every denomination to scorn. Sir Thomas Overbury was extremely sardonic in his picture of the bigoted and zealous Puritan, "whose fiery zeal keeps him continually costive." Also, in his *News from the Church*, he charges contemporary Christians with blindly obeying false teachers, and avers that the Reformers "wear the name of Christ for a charm, as Papists do the cross." So much energy, he said, has been dissipated on trifles, and the people have so linked their lives to faction and error that spiritual vitality has nearly faded away. In fact, insanity has conquered the religious realm.

Robert Herrick usually figures as a merely pious poet, but although he was in holy orders, his opinions were very advanced. He was deprived of his living in 1647, but his benefice was restored to him in 1662 under Charles II. Apparently, he was scarcely conscious of his own heterodoxy. His God was crudely anthropomorphic, and the poet was as familiar with the deity as Swedenborg. So much so, that Herrick invited God to read his verses and assured him that their imperfections would prove harmless to him:—

"But as Heaven's public and immortal eye  
Looks on the filth, but is not soil'd thereby,  
So Thou, my God, may'st on this impure look,  
But take no tincture from my sinful book."

Epicureanism and Materialism are rarely absent from Herrick's religious meditations, and to him the deity was as unlike the malignant monster of Calvinism as any divinity could be. Even the future life appeared problematical to Herrick, and he displayed neither interest nor sympathy with the subtleties and complexities of Christian theology, which at that time agitated the religious world. Dr. Jordan's reading of Herrick's attitude towards life and death is that: "Man should not disturb his peace and the even tenor of his life by the contemplation of matters which he cannot understand. He should rather enjoy to the fullest possible extent the blessings which God has placed in the world for his use with the hope, which Herrick expressed a little wanly, that they might be enlarged in a future life. Man should be content to grasp and enjoy that which lies easily within his power for:—

"Born I was to be old,  
And for to die here:  
After that, in the mould  
Long for to lie here.  
But before that day comes  
Still I be bousing,  
For I know in the tombs,  
There's no carousing."

Turning from the simple and gentle Herrick, we meet a man of more powerful mind in the Deist, Lord Herbert of Cherbury. A scion of a cultured and influential family, Herbert travelled extensively, and at one time served as a soldier under the Prince of Orange. In 1619 he was British Ambassador to the French Court and he published his famous *De Veritate* in Paris in 1624. Despite the work's blemishes,

for it is occasionally verbose and obscure, and at times lacks consecutiveness of thought, yet it laid a firm philosophical basis for Rationalism in religion. Herbert's unconventional handling of the most sacred subjects shocked his pious contemporaries. Dr. Jordan sees in Herbert the earliest known English writer, who produced a complete comparative analysis of religion. In this examination he displayed a praiseworthy freedom from passion and his treatment was strikingly objective. "He explored fearlessly the irrational and superstitious sanctions which have been reared about the various Christian communions, and was merciless in his denunciation of what he regarded as deliberately perpetrated clerical fraud. He sought to reduce religion to its basic truths and to indicate a platform upon which the sects of his own day might unite in peaceful worship." Lord Herbert was not immediately concerned with man's right to intellectual liberty. Still, as Dr. Jordan testifies: "In his study of the structure of religions, and in his vigorous denunciation of all forms of ecclesiastical tyranny, he was, however, to cut away the reasonable basis of the system of persecution."

In personal immortality he had no belief whatever. Man's remains are dissolved by Mother Nature to be converted into other and perhaps more exalted modes of being. Indeed, declares Herbert:

"All that built up our frail and earthly frame,  
Shall through each pore and passage make their breach,  
Unto that place from whence at first they came."

Reason is our sole guide. It is man's pre-eminent faculty, and that which distinguishes him most strikingly from the lower animals. Philosophy therefore reposes on logical thought, and reason should guide us not merely in mundane affairs, but in the deeper problems of religion. No one is entitled to exalt intuition above reason in cases where positive proof is impossible. That which obviously violates the canons of reason, or pretends to transcend reason, is utterly unworthy of a rational man's acceptance. Faith, when opposed to reason has led the clergy sadly astray.

Revelation is treated by Herbert with scant courtesy, and his criticism of the claims made on its behalf has rarely been bettered. "Thus," comments Jordan, "he examined the Christian teaching of revelation which lay at the basis of the Church's authority, with a hostile criticism which, had its nature been widely appreciated, would have called down upon him a clerical wrath far more bitter than that which compelled the timorous Selden to submit."

To Herbert, long prior to the days of Gambetta, clericalism was the enemy of civilization. In their chronic antagonism to the free exercise of the human mind, the bulk of the clergy appear very black indeed. Whatever Herbert's limitations were, when he is judged by present standards, his services to the Freethought cause were undeniably great.

Baron Brooke (1608-1643) was another splendid pioneer, whose intellectual hospitality embraced men of all creeds or none. To him, true religion might be met with in every age or country, and man's quest for certainties must prove unprofitable unless he is prepared to discard every prejudice and preconception. Man's only minister in this divine search is unclouded and unfettered reason.

Holding such enlightened views, Brooke was naturally opposed to every form of persecution. No earthly power, he said, was entitled to coerce anyone's religious actions or beliefs, so long as his creed or its observances continue harmless to the community. Moreover, no one should be penalized if his speculations lead to scepticism, "since none but God can clear the understanding."

The more deeply men think the more men differ in details. Heresy is certain to arise and is probably beneficial. Christian unity can never be established by force. Persecution may procure a seeming unanimity but, concludes Brooke, "it is only an unity of darkness and ignorance; so that the remedy proves worse than the disease." England, he averred, could never eliminate the evils that disgrace religion until she adopts the policy of the United Provinces and permits complete freedom to every faith that respects civil order and propriety.

It is a melancholy reflection that, even now, very few, if any, communities have attained this lofty standard of conduct, either in politics or religion.

T. F. PALMER.

## Henry Hetherington—1792-1849

(Continued from page 397)

WHEN Paterson was guiding the destinies of the *Oracle*, he showed that he was not overburdened with royalist proclivities, as the following paragraph written by himself will make evident:—

We had hardly finished our extra half-pint of fourpenny, and felt quite cheered at the lord having taken to himself the Duke of Sussex, when the alarming intelligence arrived that another incubus was whelped by the royal tigress, Queen Alex, Victoria, and we are sorry to announce that up to the present moment the cub and dam are both well.

The *Oracle of Reason* under the various editors, Southwell, Holyoake, Ryall, Paterson, W. J. B. (Birch) and Chilton, imposed by Government persecution, continued its course to No. 103, December 2, 1843, when it ceased to exist.

The prosecutions of the editors of the *Oracle of Reason* resulted in the formation of the Anti-Persecution Union, of which Hetherington was the moving spirit.

Charles Southwell had been sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment, and a fine of £100, and to be further imprisoned until the fine was paid. Some short time before the twelve months' imprisonment terminated, meetings were held, presided over by Hetherington, to find ways and means to pay the one hundred pounds fine. This money was raised and paid, but not until a month after his twelve months' sentence had expired.

When Paterson received his three several sentences, he insisted that his name should still be retained as editor (though Ryall and Chilton had both offered their services) as he did not wish anyone else to be punished for carrying on the *Oracle of Reason*. While serving his sentence, two Edinburgh booksellers, Finlay and Robinson, were apprehended and prosecuted for selling blasphemous literature. No sooner was he released than he immediately proceeded to Edinburgh to beard the bigots. As Hetherington justly expressed it, "He stopped up the gap of oppression, which other men had not the courage to enter." He took possession of a shop in West-Register Street, and issued a very satirical handbill, from which the following extracts are taken:—

UNDER THE PATRONAGE OF THE PROCURATOR-FISCAL,  
PATERSON & CO.

(Of the Blasphemy Depôt, London)

beg to acquaint infidels in general and Christians in particular, that in consequence of the immense demand for blasphemous works, the Procurator-Fiscal himself having taken some hundreds of volumes from another shop in this city—have opened a depôt at 38 West Register Street.

Paterson & Co. will sell all kinds of printed books, which are calculated to enlighten, without corrupting, to bring into contempt the demoralizing trash our priests palm upon the credulous as divine revelation—and to expose the absurdity of, as well as horrible effects springing from the *debasement god-idea*.

As the present brisk demand for printed books of the above-mentioned character, has been caused chiefly by the Procurator-Fiscal's anxiety to become possessed of a large number of such invaluable productions, and as that functionary is doubtless eager to obtain more, Paterson & Co. beg most respectfully to inform him, the following is a list of some of the works now on sale: *The Bible, an Improper Book for Youth: Oracle of Reason: Investigator: Great Dragon Cast Out: Yahoo: Existence of Christ Disproved: The Spirit of Bonner in the Disciples of Jesus: Palmer's Principles of Nature: New Moral World: Paley Refuted*: also the works of Mirabaud, Volney, Hume, Paine, Shelley, Dale Owen, Frances Wright, Haslam, Strauss, Carlyle, and other Common Sense Authors. *The Bible and other obscene works NOT sold at this shop.*

These bills were posted up and were torn down, the distributors arrested and the bills seized and destroyed. One zealous bigot went one day to the shop and broke the windows in, and ran off with some books, but Paterson, who happened to be in, pursued the pious thief, took him into custody and obtained a decision against him. More of Paterson's bill-stickers were apprehended and he continued to issue other placards of a racy character. He himself was arrested, was bailed out and had his head broken at a public meeting on behalf of Dr. Kalley, and again taken into custody for endeavouring to raise his voice in protest against the treatment of Dr. Kalley, a fellow blasphemer. He now employed himself in preparing his defence at his forthcoming trial.

His trial took place on November 8, 1843. He made a very able and learned defence, which was interrupted on more than one occasion, and was finally found guilty, and received a sentence of fifteen months' imprisonment, the judge declaring it a matter of consolation that the publications of Mr. Paterson had not the effect of making any serious effect upon the public, on which the *Philanthropist* remarks: "So we are left to the conclusion, that the prosecution was as uncalled for as it was inexpedient and irrational."

Robinson, who was far from robust—in fact he was frail both physically and in moral courage—pleaded Guilty, and received a sentence of twelve months' imprisonment.

Thomas Finlay, an old man, and very courageous, conducted his own defence with great ability, which the Sheriff acknowledged by "You have made a very excellent and judicious defence, and I am sorry I cannot give you the benefit of it." The Sheriff then sentenced him to a fine of ten pounds or sixty days' imprisonment, but Finlay preferred the latter, and after shaking hands with three of his sons, and a number of friends in Court, was conveyed to Calton Jail.

Matilda Roalfe, a woman of great courage, in face of these prosecutions came from London to Edinburgh to carry on the war at, as she called it, "The Atheistical Depot," 105 Nicholson Street. She circulated a Manifesto addressed to the public of Edinburgh, setting forth her determination to sell such books as contained sentiments she deemed useful to be known "whether they did or did not bring into contempt the Holy Scriptures and the Christian religion." The manifesto concluded by announcing the sale of all the prosecuted works, taking special care to notify that "Country orders were specially attended to." A few days after Finlay's sentence, her shop was raided by the police, who carried off a considerable portion

of her stock and placed her under arrest. She was brought to trial on January 23, 1844. After a severe cross-examination of the police witnesses and a vigorous defence, she was sentenced to sixty days' imprisonment. When liberated she resumed the sale of the prosecuted works and wrote a pamphlet, *Law-breaking Justified*, vindicating her whole activities in the matter. All the prisoners, Paterson, Finlay, Robinson and Roalfe testified to their undue harsh treatment in prison amounting to barbaric vindictiveness. A meeting was convened in London, on June 10, 1844, at the Literary and Scientific Institute to protest against the treatment of Paterson in the Perth Penitentiary. At this meeting Hetherington delivered the following speech. As this is the lengthiest speech by Hetherington on Freethought recorded, that the present writer has come across, it is given at greater length than would otherwise be the case. Mr. Hetherington said that the resolution in his hand would strictly prevent any general remarks from him, but he thought, after the discussion they had heard, that he would not be wholly irrelevant in saying a few words. How beside common sense were these prosecutions! Locke had proved the necessary nature of our ideas, and it was wanton cruelty to punish differences we could not help, and the sincerity which did us honour. There could be no infidelity to truth—all men desire to be true to their own convictions. Priests were the only persons who promoted this infidelity to truth by the prosecution of sincere conviction. But there was a reason for it:—

They stand on peril's brink,

If for themselves the flock presume to think. [laughter.]

He was bred a good churchman. But he must say, that his parish priest, the rector of St. Giles-in-the-Field, since the Bishop of Chichester, was the worst parson he ever knew. Cobbett used to say that we had no occasion to think for ourselves, as we paid the parsons to do that. Now his mother was of that religion, and brought him up in it. But on one occasion he found, by accident, in a book, the thirty-nine articles in which he had been believing all his life, and he thought he would see what they were. There he found out they were all to be damned (laughter), and that they were all conceived in sin. (Roars of laughter.) Then he went to his mother and said, "Mother, do you believe that?" (Peals of laughter.) Next I found out that good works were bad (laughter); that they went for nothing (laughter). He assured them that it was so. It was in the 11th article. He must give the full particulars or they would not believe it (laughter.) The connexion of these remarks and their present meeting was, that if any doubted these things, and expressed their doubts, they had a blasphemy law to shut them up in jail. The Church-clergy were more honest than the dissenters, in that they wanted the tithes, and they did not care what people believed, provided they got them. Dissenters were not less fond of this world, but they made a greater fuss about the next. It was odd that parsons were always called *one way*. Nobody was ever known to have a "call" to receive two hundred-a-year when he was pocketing four hundred. Their calls were all *upwards* (laughter). A body of American Christians once sent to Priestley to find them a preacher, but when the doctor heard what salary they could afford to give, he frankly answered that he could not get one at that price (laughter). They had heard of Sambo, who was all tears when his pastor was delivering his farewell sermon. "Massa," said he, "why you go leave us?" "I have had a call, Sambo." "Very sorry," said Sambo; "but what you have, Massa, now?" "One hundred pounds, Sambo." "What you have then, Massa?" "Two

hundred pounds, Sambo." "Ah! Massa, Massa, God Almighty not found you someting more, he might a called till he black in de face 'fore you come." (Laughter.) Yet are we to be subjected to blasphemy prosecutions for expressing our opinions concerning the dogmas of such men.

On his own trial, Lord Campbell told him, if he would plead guilty, he would not be called up for judgment—but how could he plead guilty when he was not guilty? When he spoke of honesty in the matter a lawyer of considerable eminence asked him if he had not been vitiating his understanding by reading novels. Lord Campbell said, that Mr. Hetherington might entertain what opinions he pleased, but not express them. Now if it was not criminal to differ from a lord, he could show that that was all nonsense. What should we think if a physician, who, by long study, had discovered cures for many complaints, should be told that he might believe what he pleased of these discoveries, but must not express them? Lord Campbell, by his long experience, had been able to suggest many improvements in the law. But what would he say if he was told to keep his opinions to himself? (Cheers.) His lordship would not agree to this. Then why should we not be allowed to make known our discoveries or reflections on theology? There were some men who were kept in order by red coats and some by blue coats and some by black coats. The grown-up children were kept in order by black coats. They were told that they must not hear anything against Christianity, if they did they were "done for"; and that was sufficient to keep them in order. (Laughter.) Sir Robert Peel was liberal enough to release Carlile, and he might do it in Paterson's case. Paterson ought not to be neglected; he was one of those men to whom he would ever acknowledge the deepest obligations. He (Mr. H.) was growing old, and fond of retirement, and was thankful to those young fellows who would battle for liberty for him. *But if the Government interfered with his right of free speech, old as he was, and ruinous as it might be to have his home broken up again, he would suffer it, and endure any kind of imprisonment, rather than give up that right.* (Protracted cheers.) Mr. Roebuck was a man of talent and integrity, and he had no doubt that he would do justice to the memorial. He should, therefore, move that that gentleman be requested to present it in the House of Commons.

However, Sir James Graham, before whom the memorial was placed, refused to ameliorate the harsh treatment that Paterson was subjected to, and Paterson completed his sentence under conditions that were a disgrace to humanity. It was this Sir James Graham who had Mazzini's letters opened, which resulted in the execution, in July, 1844, by the Austrian Government of the Bandieri Brothers and seven of their comrades for the part they took in the struggle against Austrian domination in Italy.

In February, 1845, Paterson completed his sentence and proceeded to London. On April 6, he was entertained at a Tea and Soirée at the Hall of Science, at which some 300 persons were present. The soirée was followed by a public meeting, at which Hetherington presided. The chairman, after an appropriate speech, presented to Mr. Paterson the sum of £30 11s. 6d. (the amount of the Testimonial then subscribed), and gave the following sentiment: "Mr. Thomas Paterson—the assembled friends of the right of private judgment, and the free expression of opinion, embrace this occasion of presenting to Mr. Paterson the present testimonial, to convey their warmest respect and approbation to him, who a second time left a quiet retirement to place himself in the

thick of danger, and by inflexible defiance, to render the bigots' power abortive, and smooth the path for future friends of freedom."

AMBROSE G. BARKER.

(To be continued)

## Acid Drops

The *New Statesman* give prominence to the following from Thomas Carlyle:—

This morning I went for a frank, and half incidentally saw the Coronation procession, which seventy or eighty thousand woodenheads besides were looking at. It only detained me some five or ten minutes. . . . Quantities of caps and feathers, and then at last the royal carriage all made of glass and gilding, more like a huge glass lantern than anything I ever saw; and there the poor old King and poor ugly Queen, dimly seen sitting like two foolish wax-dolls (which they were) letting themselves be trailed, in their lantern go-cart. What took me I know not; but I burst into the heartiest fit of laughter I have had for some time: and perhaps one ought rather to have cried; for it was the ghost of the Past perhaps taking final leave of the world, where as body or as ghost it has now walked for some three thousand years! Poor King! they will be consecrating and *clothing* him even now in that old Abbey; and what avails it to him or to me or to any man or woman! *Ex nihilo nihil fit.*

Out of nothing, nothing comes. And nothing comes as well from our present-day literary gentleman possessing half the virility of a Carlylean paragraph. There are ways and means of dealing with our present literary luminaries, which would not have worked, and dare not have been attempted, with Thomas Carlyle.

A complete screen church service was given, the other day, at a cinema in London. It was the first time in the history of both the Church and the screen, and, of course, most of the reports claim the experiment to be a complete success—that is, from a religious point of view. Actually, as the vicar in charge gave no specific directions when "Our Lord" required his sheep to sit, or stand, or kneel, "there was a certain amount of confusion." Jerome's play, "The Passing of the Third Floor Back," was used as a sermon, but one religious critic thinks the audience could have understood it just as well without the "grotesque" comments given by a preacher. The same critic complained of "the total inability of an audience to kneel in a cinema" as this "deprives a screen service of much devotional value." We fully sympathize here; it is just as difficult to kneel in front of our radio set at the appropriate moment. However, if only a multiplication of these cinema services would reduce the number of churches and priests in our happy land, it would be a step in the right direction.

The *Middlesex and Bucks Advertiser* devoted two columns recently to the discussion which followed the request of some cinema proprietors to be allowed to open on Sundays at Ruislip and district. Out of 36,000 electors, only 103 voted on the question, and needless to say, the big majority of these were against any opening. If people can be so apathetic they deserve the dictatorship of these anachronistic Sabbatarians. The opposition was led, as could be expected, by the Rev. E. I. Icy Peake, the Methodist Minister, and he had with him a number of the older residents. Mr. Peake objected to the proposed opening on "humanitarian" grounds—it meant Sunday work. Moreover it would destroy the "quietness of Sunday" in the town. In fact, dramatically declared the Rev. gentleman, "This is nothing more or less than an attempt to commercialize Sunday," an intelligent pronouncement received with rounds of applause.

Of course, there was some opposition—for example, Mr. Jones declared "that the opposition to Sunday opening came from bigoted intolerance which

said if you don't come to Church you are not going anywhere else." But Mr. Jones got sadly mixed up when he added that "the church had fought for freedom for centuries," and now denied people enjoyment on the one free day of the week. Another gentleman in favour of the opening said that they had to go to the police to stop young people from smashing windows on Sunday! It would be far better for them to be in a cinema. The debate continued in this manner, the net result being that it was agreed that another poll should be taken. What a picture of wisdom in our enlightened age!

The Rev. E. J. G. Forse claims that he "does not know of a single Black Madonna in the Church of England; but elsewhere they are not uncommon." He says that "no single explanation can be found for all these statues and pictures"—which is, of course, true. Some of the black paintings of Mary have become black only through age—or bad paints; while the statues may be black, because, like so many of the early Christian saints, they have never been washed. But Mr. Forse is obliged to admit that the well-known Freethought explanation, that many of the statues are of Isis and Horus, is certainly true. They became Mary and Jesus because the story of "virgins" giving birth to "saviours" through "gods" was quite a common one, and was adopted by Christianity just as many other Pagan myths were grafted on to that religion. But in any case, if Mary ever lived at all, she must have been as dark as an Arab—and so must Jesus. An "Aryan" Jesus is just as ridiculous as a "divine" Jesus.

The Bishop of Kensington and Nonconformist ministers attended the Summer School of the British Hygiene Council and assisted when the question was raised of giving instruction in the physical facts of marriage to those about to marry. The Bishop of Kensington said:—

I believe that there ought to be knowledge in adolescence, but information should come at the proper time.

Is it possible that the Bishop thinks that the "proper time" is to give an "essentially last-minute talk to those about to get married?" Still his presence at such a gathering is an indication that the opinions of Jesus on such matters are being brought up to date and for this small mercy, we are thankful.

One of our Bishops has had a Bible specially made for him, a Big Bible to match our Big Coronation Year. And it is such a heavy Bible. It looks as if our ecclesiastics have given up the idea of the Bible being a weighty volume in any other sense of the word.

A huge warehouse near the Elephant and Castle caught fire and £100,000 of stock has been lost. Spurgeon's Tabernacle, in the neighbourhood, was in danger of catching fire, so, led by a white-haired woman, crowds knelt on the pavements outside and prayed that that building might be saved from the conflagration.

Suddenly, as if by a miracle, the wind dropped and then changed direction—it seemed as though the prayers of the crowd were answered.

A rather mean and partial prayer which got, as it deserved, a mean and partial answer—for the Tabernacle did not escape damage. Spurgeon's Tabernacle has had a visitation of this kind from the Lord before, a healthy and unmistakable wipe-out. We advise the congregation at that building to look to their formulas—something is evidently displeasing the Lord in their method of approach to the Holy One.

Dean Inge, in his Presidential Address to the English Association at Bedford College, criticized modern writers for not bringing out the noble side of human nature, and attributed it to reaction from the Victorian era with its passion for covering everything up. Such a pendulum movement is, of course, in the nature of things and in-

evitable—on the assumption, of course, that everything is natural, and subject to the universal law of causation. But the Victorian era had more of religion in it than our era and its contribution, from what *should be* the Dean's point of view, *should* have something in it of permanency. He asks:—

What was the use of shouting from the housetops things everyone knew and had agreed not to talk about?

The answer, of course, is that "everyone" has not agreed to any such thing.

The Archbishop of Canterbury is very disturbed at the future of Church Schools. To apply the many schemes proposed, in an effective way, would, he said recently, cost over £400,000. In particular, he showed great concern over the religious training given in our secondary schools which "had not been at all what they would wish." Well, we are delighted to hear it. We would like to see the religious difficulties multiplied; none of our State-aided schools should waste their time teaching religious imbecilities. That should be left to the Bishops and other religious persons, teaching in their own time, in their own halls. And it is bound to come to that, one day.

A Mrs. Harrison, in a religious contemporary, calls the Hiking Season, "The Unseen linking of Earth with Heaven." She must have been thinking of Enoch who "walked with God, and was not, for God took him." Mrs. Harrison might trust a "chariot of fire," like Enoch did, but to many Christians it would link up Hell instead of Heaven.

The *Methodist Recorder* asks in flaring head-lines: (1) "Does the Lord Want More Local Preachers?" and (2) "Why Doesn't He Do Something about Mussolini?" The answers are positively silly, but the questions are awkward ones. Oscar Wilde once said: "There are no indiscreet questions: the answers are often indiscreet."

## Fifty Years Ago

AN alarming fact is that some of the most intelligent women in the Church are beginning to give way in their faith and zeal. Women in all ages have been the mainstay of the Church. The secret influence they exert upon their husbands and children is incalculable as a whole. If they should desert the churches, as the men do, the death knell of religion would soon be heard sounding its melancholy tones all over the land. No wonder, then, that I noticed with astonishment and alarm, when I attended Ingersoll's lectures, that the women in the audience were not only as numerous as the men, but appeared to be remarkably intelligent, and to belong to the higher classes of society, such as you would see in our most fashionable churches on the Sabbath.

Ingersoll is in dead earnest, and so are all those who are associated with him. So far as good morals are concerned, if the Infidels generally, and the lecturers particularly, were not persons of irreproachable lives, the press of the country, with its sharp eyes and keen scent, would soon publish the fact, and give the evidence, as it does in the case of other transgressors. But these men brave unpopularity, accept poor pay for their services when they could make fortunes in other vocations, and devote themselves to their work because, strange as it may appear to us, and horrible too, they believe religiously that the Church now is, and always has been a drawback to civilization; that her religion has no foundation in either fact or reason; and they are as sincere in their zeal to extirpate both, as the old Crusaders were to deliver Jerusalem and the holy places from the dominion of the Saracens. And I fear that unless we arouse from our lethargy, and arm for the conflict, they will succeed.

REV. DR. JONES.

*The Freethinker*, June 26, 1887.



# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. T. BRIGHTON.—We regret to hear that Mr. T. Birtley of Chester-le-Street has suffered the loss of his wife. Perhaps you will convey to him our sympathy. We can understand the feeling of your Branch members when such an old and faithful servant of Freethought meets with one of the unavoidable, but none the less poignant, calamities.

T.F.A. (Bristol).—The Editor is glad to hear from one who heard him lecture about fifty years ago. The "Ghost" must wait its turn, but will come in for his third share of criticism, which is due to him, she or it, by right, in an early issue. Thanks for good wishes which are reciprocated.

T. J. SMITH (Guisboro).—Glad to hear from a new and active new reader of the paper.

W. S. FORBES (Sydney).—Thanks for your letter and good wishes, which we heartily reciprocate.

G. BRIANCOURT.—The *Freethinker* and *Objects and Principles of the N.S.S.* are being sent; we are obliged for the enquiry.

I. BRANSTON (Chorley).—Our new "Ingersoll" pamphlet, *The Truth About the Church*, is just the thing you require. It attends to "modern" believers very skilfully.

A. HANSON.—Thanks for new subscriber.

Much correspondence is unavoidably held over this week.

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

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

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.

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

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

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

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

## Sugar Plums

Two "Ingersoll" pamphlets are now ready. One is a further issue of *What is Religion?* specially notable, apart from its brilliancy, as the Colonel's last public utterance. The other is *The Truth About the Church*. This is reprinted for the first time in England from his lecture entitled *The Truth*, and is an utterance no Freethinker can afford to be without; for circulation amongst orthodox or semi-orthodox friends it is an admirable document. The pamphlets are of 16 pp., and are issued at One Penny each. Special terms can be arranged for quantities.

Several enquiries have been received for the special Paine Bicentenary Issue of the *Freethinker*. We were unable to supply these owing to the issue being sold out, but as we have now a few returned copies, any orders received can now probably be met.

There are some difficulties which it is even beyond the capacity of the Government to minimise. The attempt to do so, it is realized, would make matters worse. Here is an example in the shape of a House of Commons Question and Answer, taken from the *Times* report of June 18:—

### RELIGIOUS BELIEFS OF PRISONERS

Mr. Thurtle (Shoreditch, Lab.) asked the Home Secretary if he would give the latest available figures in his Department showing the religious beliefs of persons serving sentences in his Majesty's prisons; and which of the religious denominations had the largest number of adherents among the prison population.

Sir S. Hoare (Chelsea, U.): The statements made by individual prisoners on reception as to their religious persuasion are on record at the different prisons, but the figures have not been collected since 1930, when a return was sent to the honourable member. At that time over 75 per cent stated that they belonged to the Church of England, including the Church in Wales, and there is no reason to suppose that there has since been any substantial variation. (Laughter.)

Mr. Thurtle: Will the right hon. gentleman draw the attention of the Archbishop of Canterbury to this important fact? (Renewed laughter.)

Sir George Young, begins an article in the current *Fortnightly* with this caustic paragraph:—

And so you are back for the Coronation, from that dreadful Civil War—how glad you must be; what a difference you must find! "Yes," I say, "there is a difference." It is certainly different to be in a country where everyone is singing "God Save the King," and drowning their sorrows from over-taxation and under-employment with "A Health unto his Majesty." The Monarch, is moreover, good magic against battle, murder and sudden death, and the Monarch is a magician that will save us from either decadence or dictatorship.

Yes, England is indeed different from Spain, where everyone is being mown down by machine-guns or blown-up by bombs, because some believe in "Nationalist-Syndicalism," and others in "National-Socialism." Surely we may suppose that the Spaniard is possessed of Devils, Black Devils of Fascism and Red Devils of Communism—from which we are saved in virtue of a King crowned by the Grace of God and Mr. Baldwin. Well, somehow, I am writing this on my way back to Cordoba without seeing the Coronation Festivities.

Yes, back to Cordoba, where, paradoxically enough, Spaniards feel "that life is to-day worth living, if only because it is worth dying for the life they want, while we English seem not to know what we want from life, because we find nothing worth dying for." In Spain, men and women believe they "are forging in the furnaces of war, new laws, new liberties and new lives."

Mr. G. Whitehead will speak in Sunderland to-day (June 27) and each evening until Friday, with the exception of Wednesday evening, when he will speak in South Shields. There is a Branch of the N.S.S. at each place, and the local saints will help at all the meetings, at which Pioneer Press literature, and details of membership in the N.S.S. may be obtained.

A Rabbi was charged Ten Guineas by his tailor for making him a coat. On remonstrating, the tailor explained that it had taken him six days to make it. "Six days," said the Rabbi. "Why the Lord God made the whole world in six days." "Yes," came the response, "But vot a world!"

One of the saddest chapters in human history is that which describes the cruel manner in which the insane were treated in times past. Notwithstanding that it is happily a thing of the past, it will be instructive to inquire from what causes the barbarous usage sprang: for it was not common to all nations and all times; on the contrary, it had its birth in the ignorance and superstition of the dark ages of Christian Europe.—Henry Maudsley, "*Responsibility in Mental Disease*."

## Masterpieces of Freethought

LETTERS TO THE CLERGY

BY

C. J. HASLAM

III.

HASLAM can be called the apostle of common-sense. He refused to take any but the plain and obvious meaning of the words used in the "Divine Book," the discussions of commentators leaving him quite cold. What did Matthew, or Mark, or John, mean when he said so and so? Well, answered Haslam, the words used have a clear and unequivocal significance in ordinary language, and they mean exactly what they would mean if they were used by a secular writer—or they have no meaning. He did not, of course, deny the language of symbolism. Under certain circumstances, everybody is bound to make use of metaphors and figures of speech. Jesus naturally never meant, when he said he was a *vine*, that he was literally a tree, or when he declared he was the "light" of the world, that he was literally a flash-lamp of some sort. But, for example, what was actually meant by such a text as this: "But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it new with you in my Father's Kingdom"? Haslam's comment is:—

Here is Christ talking about drinking wine in his Father's Kingdom! What are we to conclude from this? After taking a glass or two with his disciples, he says he will drink no more until he meets with them in his Father's Kingdom; and then, I suppose, they will have a glorious fuddle. I have a Catechism which contains this question, "What sort of bodies will they have in heaven?" The answer is, "*Spiritual bodies* swifter than lightning, and brighter than the sun." The idea of *spiritual* bodies is strange enough; but for things without either mouths or bellies to be able to drink wine is astonishing indeed.

It can be urged that in these days there are few Christians who really believe that Jesus was going to drink real wine in a real kingdom after death. It may be so; I am sure Dr. Inge would pass some sarcastic comments if he were credited with this sort of tomfoolery. But in Haslam's day it was the current belief; a man like Dean Burgon believed it all exactly as stated; and he was by no means a fool. On the contrary, he was a fine scholar and in power of argument immeasurably superior to many members of the present-day Christian Church. If pious people no longer believe the kind of thing tilted at by Haslam, it is to him and his like they owe their release from a state of primitive bondage; and we should not let them forget it.

Haslam waxes very satirical over Jesus's injunction that his followers should resist not evil. He points out that the "sacred" text declares that when Jesus was about to be arrested, "Behold, one of them which were with Jesus, stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest, and smote off his ear." Says Haslam:—

What! one of them who were with Jesus, drew *his sword*. What! Did Jesus not enjoin that his followers should resist not evil; that when they were smitten on the one cheek, they were to turn the other also; and that they were to return good for evil? Who then was this man who drew a sword? Would anybody credit that Simon Peter was this man? In the first place, Simon Peter was one of those who were commissioned by Jesus Christ to go forth into the world and preach that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand; he was to make known to mankind the

injunction of his divine master, without the practice of which it would be impossible to be saved; which injunctions were, to love our enemies, return good for evil, when smitten on the one cheek to turn the other also, to resist not evil, and the practice of many other precepts of a similar character; and yet this very man, to show, I suppose, the force of example as well as precept, used to carry a sword, and on one occasion actually cut a man's ear off! . . . Where was the consistency of Jesus, in having a man in his company with a sword by his side, and that man an apostle?

Of course, the point has been laboured many times on and off our platforms, in our books, and pamphlets, and periodicals. But it has still to be made; and never so much as when we get hordes of priests of all religious denominations indulging in hysterical adulation of Jesus, not only as the one genuine Saviour of the next world, but of this one also. Over and over again we get people talking about the marvellous, the wonderful, the unsurpassable teaching of "Our Lord," which, if only put into practice forthwith, would do away with poverty, vice, misery and war, almost as quickly as a flash of lightning. Nothing seems to be easier than to get a journal—almost any journal—to publish an article eulogizing "Our Lord." But criticism, even of the mildest, of some of the silly statements, and stupid prophecies, or of the still sillier actions of Jesus, is rigorously excluded.

There are scores of passages in the *Letters to the Clergy* I should like to transcribe. Haslam had none of the ponderous, if great, learning of Strauss, or the almost divine pen of Rénan; but what he says is full of downright common-sense, and could be read, not merely with interest these days, but with profit.

He, like so many of our early fighting Freethinkers, had the greatest admiration for Thomas Paine. In fact, as he insisted that Jesus "was an ignorant and irrational being," it is not surprising to find Haslam declaring that "Paine was a man, who in intellect, was a hundred times Christ's superior." He devoted part of one letter to the way in which Paine had "been assailed in a manner the most cowardly and brutal that can be conceived; and the most violent of his opponents were men filled with the Holy Ghost, whose business it was to preach peace on earth and goodwill to men." And he added:—

Notwithstanding your foul and brutal treatment of Thomas Paine, notwithstanding your lies and forgeries in endeavouring to destroy his character and reputation, he is now rising rapidly in the estimation of the people; and in proportion as he rises in the same, you [clergy] fall. When the office of priest shall be unknown to the human race, the memory of Thomas Paine will be honoured and revered.

Few prophecies look more like being fulfilled than this one.

The twenty-four *Letters to the Clergy* were followed by a series entitled *Materials for Deciding the Question Whether or not the Bible is the Word of God: In a Series of Letters Addressed to the Bishop of Exeter*. They form splendid material for deciding the question—in the negative. They are packed with quotations from Church historians, damaging admissions against the idea of a "divine" revelation. It is impossible here, to give even the briefest summary of Haslam's very fine resumé; all I can do is to deplore the way in which both sets of *Letters* have died out, being, except to a few, almost unknown these days.

Of course, the reason why it is difficult to come across these two works by Haslam is that the *Letters* were published as penny pamphlets. They must have been eagerly read, passed from hand to hand, and, like so many other famous pamphlets, be-

came gradually dirty and torn, and were eventually destroyed. The copies which survive are the bound-up ones, and lucky possessors should hold on to them like grim death.

What makes the *Letters to the Bishop of Exeter* valuable is that Haslam again and again refers to the trials for "blasphemy," which publishers and booksellers were undergoing on his account. He never was prosecuted himself; but Henry Hetherington, John Cleave, Abel Heywood and others were arrested, and either suffered imprisonment or were heavily fined. "Dungeons, however, my Lord," cried Haslam, "will never convince people of their error. In deciding the truth or falsehood of a question, dungeons are left altogether out of the question. They are intellectual arguments, not physical ones, that make impressions upon the mind. . . . Dungeons, my Lord, are the arguments of ignorance and brutality; and those who use them sacrifice their character as rational men."

One would never think, realizing the immense progress which has been made in so many ways since Haslam wrote those pregnant words, that they are as applicable now as then.

Dictatorships of the Right or the Left, or indeed of any kind which rely on force, can never, in the ultimate, succeed. The dictatorship of the intellect is the only dictatorship that matters, that can survive, that, indeed, is surviving. Dungeons and firing squads have never advanced truth a particle. And reformers, among whom Charles Junius Haslam surely has a place, have ever recognized that fact.

H. CUTNER.

## Revisiting Ireland

It is always interesting to revisit the land of one's birth and where one has lived in younger days, and recently I spent a ten days' holiday in that part of Ireland I know best—the City of Cork.

When I look back on the days of Parnell, and the activities of the Irish Party in their agitation for Home Rule, I realize how true were the statements of the critics of the Home Rule Bill at that time, when they said that Home Rule for Ireland meant Rome Rule.

In England the Roman Catholic priest, ever striving to make converts, always appears suave and polite; but at heart he is, as he always has been, and always will be, a foe to progress; and in Ireland he represents the Iron Hand without the Velvet Glove.

Everywhere one goes, the main object of the priest is to keep the Church always first and last in the eyes of the people.

The Irish papers are most illuminative in this respect. Every day whilst I was on holiday, the leading paper of Munster, the *Cork Examiner*, had, on its picture page, one, two, or three pictures in which priests featured. A priest opening a Dairy; a priest at a Football Match; the Bishop at a Confirmation Class; a priest opening a new church; a priest at a funeral, etc.

One reads of an accident where the priest and the doctor were sent for—the priest always first.

Every day this paper publishes a news summary; I picked one up at random, of May 15, 1937, and these were the first five items of the world news:—

*False Doctrine.* Important addresses were delivered by the Bishops of Kerry and Waterford.

*Nun's Death.* Most Rev. Doctor O'Brien presided at the funeral service for Mother Bride Moran.

*Cork Priest.* The funeral took place, after Requiem High Mass, of Rev. Ed. MacDondald.

*The Dail.* The Pigs and Bacon Bill was debated.

*Priest's Peril.* Rev. D. Courtney, C.C., Ruan, Clare, narrowly escaped when his house was burned down.

On May 10, the All-Ireland Football Title-holders (Co. Mayo) left for a tour of the U.S.A.: accompanying the team was the Rev. E. O'Hara, who had been appointed

their spiritual adviser. Fancy sending a football team on tour with a spiritual adviser; it's just a small thing, but it shows one that the wretched Irish cannot move without having one of the Holy Joes tacked on, even to their sport.

The Irish priest of to-day is an infinitely poorer type mentally than his predecessor of 30 years ago. Then, many of them went to Rome or Louvain for their training, and so were men who had travelled and acquired some knowledge of the world; but a great many of the present-day priests, being sons of publicans and small farmers, have taken their theological training at Maynooth, Co. Dublin, and have never been out of the country. Their minds are absolutely obsessed with superstition and ancient history. The Battle of the Boyne is as real to them as if it took place last week, and every anniversary of an Irish patriot, be it Wolfe Tone or Robert Emmett to the leaders of the 1916 rebellion, is used as an opportunity for a tirade of hatred against England.

In the quaint old town of Youghal, where Sir Walter Raleigh first planted the potato, there is a statue erected in an open square. The inscription underneath reads, "In memory of the Rev. Peter O'Neill, parish priest of Ballymacoda, cruelly flogged by British soldiers in 1798." The fact that about this time and much later, hundreds of British soldiers were flogged by other British soldiers (flogging being then considered a necessary part of both Army and Navy discipline), and that no priest or parson ever protested against this flogging, was not chronicled.

This statue of the O'Neill gentleman is kept washed and clean—it's about the only clean thing in Youghal; 95 per cent of the shops could do with a coat of paint, and there is a general air of delapidation here, as elsewhere in Ireland: and yet, new churches are being erected everywhere.

Despite what I have written, there is an enormous undercurrent at work in Ireland, and to-day the power of the priest is infinitely less than it was even 20 years ago. In their blind hatred of England, they allowed the I.R.A. to flood the country with Communist literature; but the priests suddenly awakened to the fact that this literature was not alone anti-capitalistic, but also most anti-religious; and members of the I.R.A. read for the first time that the church in Ireland was a much greater enemy to them than they thought England was. To-day there are hundreds of young Irishmen who are absolutely indifferent to the teachings of the church: they don't advertise the fact, for it would mean that those of them who have jobs would very soon lose them, and those on the dole would cease to receive it.

Every week with monotonous regularity, Irish priests thunder against the anti-God influences that are making themselves felt in Ireland. Saint Patrick was supposed to have abolished snakes from Ireland—we are not told if they were of the poisonous variety; but it is a pity that the priest cannot be abolished, for he certainly is of this species.

The Irishman is often termed an unconscious humourist, and I think one of the best Irish jokes I know is that this place should be called the Irish Free State. The other day a wretched chemist was fined £100 for selling a Birth-Control appliance, and the giving of Birth-Control information is punishable by a heavy fine. Books which can be bought in any bookshop in London are on the index, and any book of advanced opinions, literary or otherwise, is refused entry into the country.

Two or three years ago, when two priests in the North of England were mixed up in a rather unsavoury case, any issue of an English newspaper containing an account of the incident was confiscated at the Customs. De Valera, the head of the Irish Government, who prates continually of freedom, is a narrow-minded religious fanatic, absolutely under the thumb of the priest; a slave and a dupe of the church, or, as the latter prefers to call him, "a true son of the church." His new constitution proposes to abolish divorce in the Free State.

However, it would be unfair to lay all the blame at the door of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, and pretend that their Protestant brethren are an enlightened, tolerant community. Last year I visited the North of Ireland, and for fanaticism, bigotry and narrow-mindedness, there is no difference whatever between the Roman

Catholic bigot of the South and the Protestant zealot of the North: they are equally objectionable.

Lord Craighaven, the head of the Ulster Government, is just as narrow in his outlook as De Valera, and the Protestant clergy just as intolerant as their Roman Catholic brethren in the Free State, but they are not so dangerous in the respect that they are not so well organized as the Roman Catholics who speak with one voice and are a united body against progress. On reading their papers one would think that Franco and his crowd of murdering mercenaries exemplified the spirit of the Crusaders, the true soldiers of Christ. Prayers for the success of Franco are offered in the churches, and that gentleman seems to have so many admirable qualities that one would not be surprised if he were eventually added to the roll of the multitudinous Roman Catholic Saints.

We read, during the Coronation week, of riots, rows and baton charges between Roman Catholics and Protestants in Belfast. Many years ago when Thackeray visited Ireland, he said afterwards that "they were all hating each other for the love of God."

Ireland affords, to all Freethinkers, a wonderful illustration of what happens when religion gets a hold on the people.

F. A. HORNIBROOK.

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## Candidates for Heaven

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THE acceptance of evolution by many churchmen renders even more pertinent the Atheist's inquiry as to whether animals, too, are eligible for the hospitality of St. Peter. If life is a web, then there is no warrant for saying Heaven can accommodate only that part in our own vicinity. And so the Rev. W. R. Matthews, of St. Paul's, has said that before he will give up his hope of survival after death, he is ready to grant it to some of the higher animals.

This is going somewhat beyond the article of his faith, but my complaint is not that he has said too much, but too little. He should have indicated a point among man's graded predecessors at which the power of being immortal begins. This should not be beyond him, for it is remarkable to what dizzy heights of speculation the religious apologist will soar, at the same time accusing the Atheist of dogmatism.

A Christian gentleman informed me that the differences between us and "the next highest animal, namely, the ape," are very marked. This is irrelevant, and in any case untrue, since the ape is very, very far from being the next highest. I pointed out to him that Dr. Rivet has shown that the differences between pithecanthropus, sinanthropus, australopithecus, Polynesian, Melanesian and Indonesian types are not greater than those between the 500 odd mutants of the fruit-fly *Drosophyla melanogaster*.

Not only this, but each year brings modern man ever more securely into connexion with the rest of the animal world. Another skull, for instance, was discovered last year at Swanscombe (Kent), so that we have an ally for Sussex Man in Kent Man, who is rather lower though similarly to be classed as Eoanthropus. The skull was found in two parts, which fit into each other, and come from the same clearly datable stratum with the same flint tools ("Acheulian") of the second period of the Old Stone Age. According to Gerald Heard's report the pieces were picked, over a period of a year, from undisturbed soil 24 feet from the surface of the 100-foot Thames Terrace. There are many clues to the lowliness of this creature—the crown of the head, the brain-print of a very rudimentary mind, and so on, but his most interesting feature is his dimple. It is the kind of hollow made by a muscle-detachment, and it is just where in our-

elves runs that almost atrophied muscle which enables some to move their ears.

Even more recent is a find resembling the Taungs skull (Prof. R. Dart, 1927), by Dr. R. Broom of Transvaal Museum, Pretoria, who explored material after a blast in the caves. The skull is of a fossil anthropoid, and in the same matrix were found a detached right maxilla and three teeth. Later the left maxilla appeared, in perfect condition, and there is enough evidence to reconstruct the entire dentition. A premolar is like that of dryopithecus, and so human that if found without the skull it would be held as human. The Taungs skull was so near the true line of descent that it might have been regarded virtually as the "missing link." But it was immature, and there was the possibility of being misled by infant resemblances to our own types. The present find, however, is unquestionably adult, and Dart's view is now well confirmed, and the latest candidate for immortality is *australopithecus transvaalensis*.

And so, on Dr. Matthews' view, we are to expect a glorious assortment of brethren in the after-life. But only some are to be admitted. Dr. Matthews will not have toads and snails and tapeworms receiving the blessing.

St. Peter will open the Gate, first to Dr. Matthews and his colleagues, then to the commonalty, then to sub-men, hominids, pithecanthropus, anthropoid apes, and then slam the gate in the face of some poor monkey who was next in the queue, and whose own offspring was the last to be admitted.

Dr. Matthews will find, in his Heaven, congenial company no doubt, but let us hope they give his sermons a more critical acceptance than they at present appear to have.

G. H. TAYLOR.

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## The Baptist Outlook

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Change and decay in all around I see.

A NEWSPAPER report of the Annual Assembly of the Northern Baptist Association affords rather interesting and instructive reading, if not to the Baptist adherents themselves, at least to those Freethinkers who take note of the elements to see which way the religious wind is blowing. The main purpose of the Conference seems to have been to consider what attitude the Baptists ought to adopt in this present age of uncertainty and change, in view of the declining power of the pulpit and the waning interest in religion and its message. It must have been rather a gloomy, pessimistic gathering, as none of the speakers were able to discern a single ray of hope that might encourage them to look forward to the long-delayed revival of religion, and a return to the simple faith of our forefathers. The principal speaker, with a courage apparently born of despair, said:—

When we talk about the Word of God, we should be prepared quite frankly to say what we mean by the expression. We should not give the people the impression that we mean what our grandfathers meant by it, whereas we mean something quite different.

It does not appear from the report that he intimated, to his clerical brethren assembled, what particular meanings they were now to attach to "the Word of God." The fourth gospel begins with the words, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." But it is very improbable that the speaker had any such Hellenistic Pagan nonsense in his mind when he talked so glibly about the Word of God.

Our grandfathers certainly knew what *they* meant by it; they meant the Bible, the inspired record of those revelations of God, "who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets." It is this Bible as we are often enough told, "which is the source of England's greatness"; and by the civilizing influence of which she has climbed to that pre-eminent position among the nations of the world. And one may well ask where this rev. gent. got his mandate from to alter and re-interpret it at his own sweet will. It says much for the changed atmosphere of such assemblies that none of his listeners seemed to think it worth while to warn this rash speaker of the awful fate awaiting those who take away, or add to, so much as one jot or tittle of the ancient Word. Our "grandfathers" would not have sat so quietly by without a stern remonstrance at such impious handling of the sacred scriptures. The speaker went on to say:—

It was regrettable that certain sections of the Church had developed the habit of disparaging preaching. In certain quarters it had fallen into disrepute, and preachers themselves were often regarded as ineffectual or ornamental persons.

The pew has developed a critical turn of mind. The minister of a Presbyterian Church being away on holiday, his pulpit was occupied by a stranger. The leading deacon on arriving home from the service, was asked by his wife how the stranger had acquitted himself. "There were three things wrong with the sermon," said the deacon. On the good lady asking what they were, he replied: "In the first place it was read. In the second place it was badly read. And in the third place it wasn't worth reading." The causes of the decay of the power of the pulpit were also dealt with. It appears that:—

The appeal to the popular imagination which played a great part in the preaching of our fathers had been rendered much more difficult by the popularization of the changed conception of the universe. The application of critical methods to the Old and New Testaments administered a sharp blow to traditional doctrine. Preachers and hearers were the victims of an age of intellectual ferment, uncertainty and change.

Which means to say, that the old gospel ship has fouled her moorings, and is floundering about on a trackless sea, without a compass. The appeal to the imagination, to the fears and credulity of the religious mind, can no longer be relied upon to bring people to the penitent form or increase the membership of the Church. The "Sure foundation," which these gospel preachers vaunted as stable and everlasting, is fast crumbling away, undermined by the spread of scientific knowledge and consequent changed views of life. Thoughtful people are no longer content to listen to meaningless harangues about death and hell and eternity. It is Life, more life and fuller, that they want; something satisfying alike to the intellect and the heart.

I had thought of heading these few comments, "Giving the Game away," as the speaker went on to ask: "Are we preachers clear as to what we want to preach, and why we want to preach it?" There would, of course, have been no need in a former age to ask any such questions. The authority of the Bible was practically undisputed, and they could roam at will among its fables and miracles, its false cosmogony and astronomy, and draw fanciful pictures of our "home in heaven," and dilate upon the awful terrors of hell, without any fear that anything they said would be called in question. But the application of critical methods to the Old and New Testaments has taken the wind out of their sails; and now they are not quite

clear as to what they want to preach, nor why they want to preach it! One might make a shrewd guess as to what it is they *want* to preach; but unfortunately the demand for such wares no longer exists.

The fact is that the Protestant pulpit lost its greatest asset when it was obliged to drop the doctrine of an eternal hell. And the Baptist body, more than any other Christian sect, strove vigorously to keep the hell-fires burning as long as possible. When we recall the sermons of the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, so popular in their day, they help us to realize how largely hell loomed in the popular imagination of the time. It has been remarked that you may now go from Land's End to John O'Groats, and never hear a single pulpit reference to it. Here and there you would have found an odd minister or two who were courageous enough publicly to avow their disbelief in it, but they were regarded with suspicion as not being orthodox. The Rev. B. J. Snell, who died at Brixton a few years ago, in my younger days used to be the minister of a Congregational Church, situated only a few hundred yards from where I am writing. And it was quite a usual thing, on his appearance in public, for the street urchin to shout, "The Rev. Bernard J. Snell, the man who doesn't believe there is any hell." But he lived long enough to see the doctrine utterly discredited. (The Church is now a well-patronized Cinema.) The laity, too, played their part in helping to kill such a horrible notion. In the little village where I was born, my parents attended a small Presbyterian Church, which largely depended upon "supplies" to fill the pulpit. This was occupied one Sunday morning by a visiting elder, who preached a lurid, hell-fire sermon. One of the visitors was a little old gentleman who lived in the Hall. After the service, as he was leaving, in a severe, rancorous voice, he asked someone: "Who is that man?" On being told that it was Mr. So and So, a butcher, from the neighbouring town, with added disgust he replied: "Well, then, I think he'd better stick to his choppers and cleavers." I remember this little church well, because no matter how drunk my respected parent might be on the Saturday night, he could always be relied upon to turn up to lead the singing on the Sunday morning.

This Baptist speaker proceeded to give the game away further:—

My experience is that many young people are driven from our churches by the belief that we are not being absolutely straightforward and honest with them.

These young people don't simply believe it; they know it; and the ministry are the victims of the truth of the saying, "Be sure your sins will find you out." The priesthood never has been honest or straightforward, where the exercise of these virtues come into conflict with the dogmas they were paid to preach. With their distinctive clerical garb they may continue to "ornament" the pulpit for some time to come, but effective preaching, so far as it seeks to revive interest in the gospel message, is a thing of the past. On this Baptist preacher's own showing, "Ichabod" is surely written above the portals of the sanctuary doors.

JOSEPH BRUCE.

For all this dissolving away of traditional opinions regarding our sacred literature, there has been a cause far more general and powerful than any which has been given, for it is a cause surrounding and permeating all. This is simply the atmosphere of thought engendered by the development of all sciences during the last three centuries. Vast masses of myth, legend, and dogmatic assertion, coming into this atmosphere, have been dissolved away.—*Andrew D. White.*

## Correspondence

### FREE SPEECH

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

SIR,—Probably most Freethinkers were very sorry when they read Jack Lindsay's letter in last week's *Freethinker*.

In my letter, June 6, 1937, I merely pointed out another instance of the attempts by the Political Left Revolutionaries, as by the Political Right Reactionaries, to prevent publicity for opinions against which they are opposed. Here and now, I am not concerned with Trotskyism, Stalinism, British Communism, British Labour Partyism, etc., etc. In my letter, I was only concerned with one instance—out of many—in which the British Communist Party supporters pursue the same policy of attempted suppression of opinion, as do the British reactionaries.

The N.S.S. stands for "equal freedom of speech and publication." Because of that, J.L. desires us to join his United Political Front. Then, he tries to justify the refusal of an ad. for a book, by the excuse that this book, "will be treated in minute critical detail in the Communist organs." Of course! Why, British Christian Organs—particularly the organs of the Roman Catholic Section of the Christians—will do that! Even they will review or criticize—in their own way—a book by Freethinkers, Atheists, or Communists, etc.; but they will allow no reading of, or publicity for, the book or article in question—so far as they can prevent it.

Whenever we find anyone trying to prevent equal free open public discussion and expression of opinion; we are justified in the conclusion that the fundamental cause is Fear—Fear of open public dialectic. In that, it is more than evident that many "Communists"—like many reactionaries—try to suppress discussion.

As to the Society of Jesus, if its head desires to advertise an anti-Secularist book, in the *Freethinker*; let him—I daren't write "her"—send in the ad., with payment in advance. I'm not a betting man; but I'd lay my best shirt—quite a good one—against Jack Lindsay's, that the ad. would appear in the *Freethinker*.

ATHOSO ZENOO.

### OUR UNFETTERED PRESS

SIR,—The letter introduced by these lines was sent off to the *Daily Herald* and to *Reynold's News*. The next day it was sent also to the *Yorkshire Evening Post*. All three rejected it. There can be no reasonable doubt that the letter was suppressed because it gives a striking instance of the foul teaching contained in the Bible, and of the shocking effects which this instruction has had upon the laws and customs of Christendom. Here followeth the epistle:—

#### ILLEGITIMACY AND THE PRIESTHOOD

The exclusion of illegitimates from Holy Orders, which was brought to the notice of Parliament this week, rests upon Biblical authority. Deuteronomy xxiii. 3, (R.V.) says:—

A bastard shall not enter into the assembly of the Lord; even to the tenth generation shall none of his enter into the assembly of the Lord.

A lengthy and very instructive article upon the legal consequences of illegitimacy appeared in *The News of the World*, on April 7, 1937 under the signature of "A London Magistrate." Regarding the bastard it said:—

The old canon law ordained that he was incapable of receiving Holy Orders; and every nominee for the hierarchy of the Church has, in his official documents to be described as "born of lawful parents." He was forbidden the Communion, and an old edict declared: "Let none be brought to baptism save them that are born of lawful wedlock."

This last ordinance was tantamount to a sentence of eternal damnation for the Lord declared, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and the spirit he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." (John iii. 5 R.V.)

This letter was duly provided with the name and address of the writer, who had no desire to seek refuge in the coward's cave, anonymity.

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

### LONDON

#### INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Professor J. C. Flugel, D.Sc.—"Examinations Examined."

#### OUTDOOR

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

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES BRANCH N.S.S. (Kingston Market): 7.0, A Public Debate between Mr. J. W. Barker (Kingston Branch N.S.S.) and Rev. Stanley Monton, B.D. (Free Churchman).

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

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 7.0, Mrs. E. Grout. Rushcroft Road, near Brixton Town Hall, 8.0, Tuesday, Mr. L. Ebury. Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town, 8.0, Friday, Mrs. E. Grout.

WEST HAM AND DISTRICT BRANCH (Corner of Deanery Road, Water Lane, Stratford, E.): 7.0, Mr. P. Goldman.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.30, Sunday, Messrs. Bryant, Barnes and Evans. 6.30, Messrs. Bryant, Barnes, Leacy, Connell and Tuson. Wednesday, 7.30, Messrs. Bryant and Tuson. Thursday, 7.30, Messrs. Saphin, Bryant, Carlton and Tuson. Friday, 7.30, Messrs. Barnes, Perry and others. The *Freethinker*, *Age of Reason* and Mr. Chapman Cohen's latest pamphlets on sale outside Marble Arch Tube Station every evening.

### COUNTRY

#### INDOOR

PRESTON BRANCH N.S.S. Hesketh Buildings, Ormskirk Road): 8.0, Special Branch Meeting.

#### OUTDOOR

BANKHEAD: 7.30, Thursday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

BLACKBURN (Market Place): 8.0, Monday, Mr. John V. Shortt.

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

CHORLEY (Market Place): 8.0, Tuesday, Mr. John V. Shortt.

EDINBURGH SECULAR SOCIETY (The Mound): 7.0, M. I. Whitefield—A Lecture.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Albert Road): 8.0, Wednesday, M. I. Whitefield. Albion Street, 8.0, Friday, M. I. Whitefield.

HIGHAM: 7.30, Thursday, Mr. J. Clayton.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Queen's Drive, opposite Walton Baths): 8.0, Messrs. John V. Shortt and Coleman. Corner of High Park Street and Park Road, 8.0, Thursday, Messrs. W. Parry and J. Morris.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Eccles Cross): 8.0, Friday, Mr. J. V. Shortt. Alexander Park Gates, 8.15, Saturday, W. A. Atkinson. Platt Fields, 3.0, Sunday, W. A. Atkinson—"The Struggle for Freedom of Thought." Stevenson Square, 7.30, Sunday, W. A. Atkinson—"The Struggle for Freedom of Thought."

NORTH ORMESBY (Market): 7.0, Tuesday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SEATON DELAVAL: 7.0, Wednesday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

PRESTON (Market Place): 8.0, Wednesday, Mr. John V. Shortt.

QUAKER BRIDGE: 3.0, Sunday, Mr. J. Clayton.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Gill Bridge Avenue): 7.0, Sunday, June 27 to Friday, July 2, Mr. G. Whitehead.

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The N.S.S. is the only organization of militant Freethinkers in this country. It aims to bring into one body all those who believe the religions of the world to be based on error, and to be a source of injury to the best interests of Society. It claims that all political laws and moral rules should be based upon purely secular considerations. It is without sectarian aims or party affiliations.

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SECULARISM affirms that this life is the only one of which we have any knowledge, and that human effort should be wholly directed towards its improvement: it asserts that supernaturalism is based upon ignorance, and assails it as the historic enemy of progress.

Secularism affirms that progress is only possible on the basis of equal freedom of speech and publication; it affirms that liberty belongs of right to all, and that the free criticism of institutions and ideas is essential to a civilized State.

Secularism affirms that morality is social in origin and application, and aims at promoting the happiness and well-being of mankind.

Secularism demands the complete secularization of the State, and the abolition of all privileges granted to religious organizations it seeks to spread education, to promote the fraternity of peoples as a means of advancing international peace, to further common cultural interests, and to develop the freedom and dignity of man.

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