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Views and Opinions

More About Thomas Paine

In reply to my "Views and Opinions" of August 1, I have received the following letter, which I print here instead of in the correspondence column, because it raises some points of interest and importance;—

Sir,—Perhaps you will permit me to reply to your comments on my review of the *Age of Reason*.

In the first place, one cannot say everything in a review of some 120 words. I assumed that most readers of the *New English Weekly* would be acquainted with Paine's reputation, and thought it unnecessary to insist on his merits, which have been advertised often enough. I therefore thought myself free to express my opinion that he is a much overrated writer, and that his book is obsolete. As to Paine's style, you quote against me several of his contemporaries. I am not impressed by their opinions, as I suspect that their approval of Paine's matter induced them to overrate his manner. Modern opinions would be more convincing. I make you a present of Mr. Leonard Woolf's recent remark that Paine's language "ranks only just below that of the greatest English prose writers," and, on the other hand, I would remind you of Sir Leslie Stephen's remark that Paine's ignorance was vast, and his style brutal. For my part, I think his style is sometimes good and sometimes bad, but never sufficiently good to keep alive antiquated controversies, as Swift's style does.

As to Paine's matter, I do not think it can be denied that *The Age of Reason* contains many remarks which are superficial or inaccurate, and not a few which are downright silly, e.g., the description of the book of Isaiah as "one continued, incoherent, bombastical rant," etc. (p. 93 of your excellent reprint); the confusion of the immaculate conception with the virgin birth (p. 116), and the ridiculous tirade against the teaching of Greek and Latin. (p. 30.)

But none of these objections touches the main point. However deeply one sympathizes with Paine's desire to destroy superstition, one may doubt whether his method is the right one. No doubt it is true that one can only argue with a man on his own level; but it is equally true that on some levels argu-

ment is impossible. I should not care to argue with a Fundamentalist, but if I were obliged to attempt his conversion I should begin by trying to instil into him a little common sense, and give him some acquaintance with the principles of right-thinking. It would be useless to begin by uprooting his belief in the literal inspiration of the Bible, for he would probably fill up the gap with some equally pernicious sophistry of a more modern kind. For instance, he might take to Nazism, or Fascism, or any other of the popular modern substitutes for religion. People who believe in the divinity of Jesus may be exasperating, but they are no more exasperating than those who believe in the semi-divinity of Herr Hitler, and they are perhaps less dangerous. To put it another way, people whose state of mind allows them to believe in the literal inspiration of the Bible must be capable of believing pretty well anything, and being incapable of a reasonable scepticism they will insist on believing *something*, preferably something foolish. Therefore, it is pointless to attack them on their own ground. But this is exactly what Paine does, and, in consequence, he is often reduced to arguments which are fully as unreasonable as those of his opponents. In fact, he becomes merely the hot-gospeller's opposite number. (And by the way, I called Paine "a hot-ungospeller"; you misquoted me.) For this reason, though I can believe that Paine's book changes people's minds, I doubt whether it improves them very much, and I am sure that it will not harm anybody against competent modern apologists, equipped with all the latest casuistries and prevarications.

The *New English Weekly* Reviewer.

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Is Paine Out-of-Date?

I quite agree that in the small space at the disposal of the reviewer, it was impossible to deal with the *Age of Reason* at any length, and I come at once to what I consider to be a challenge to justify the publication of a criticism of the Bible published as far back as 1794. I agree also that for people like myself, and the reviewer, it is very difficult, almost impossible, for us to argue with the lower order of Bible worshippers, who are found in all classes of society. We approach them in entire disagreement, not merely with their view of the Bible, but with their belief in God, a future life and so forth. There must be a common ground on which to meet this class of people, to include those who are very ignorant and those who consider themselves educated, this latter class comprising a surprisingly large number of retired military and naval officers, and even men in high political positions, such as that rabid sabbatarian Sir Thomas Inskip, who is willing to sacrifice one-seventh of our lives to the stupidity of a "sacred" day. But we cannot leave this Biblically besotted class without some attempt to educate them. How is it to be done?—Now Paine's *Age of Reason* represents a line of approach. Paine does not differ from them in the belief in a God and a future life. He approaches them from

that point of view. He simply denies that the Bible is a revelation from God, and proves it, mainly on their own level of Bible texts and arguments as to what a God ought to do and say. Sir Thomas Inskip would not argue with an educated Atheist of to-day—that position is beyond his mental grasp—but in the case of the *Age of Reason*, he is dealing with a book that takes him, largely, on his own ground. Paine himself had really believed in the Bible, he still accepted the major superstitions on which the Bible was based. If he cannot convert this type of Bibliolator they are indeed hopeless. And the reply to the reviewer's argument is that Paine has converted many of this class, and is still doing so.

* * *

The Pertinence of Paine

At another level we meet with a larger class of people who still profess a belief in the Bible. This class has an awareness that the old belief in the Bible will not stand. It is admitted by them that Bible science, Bible history, and Bible ethics are not satisfactory. But they refrain from ever arriving at any definite and avowed mental position concerning it. They mouth about the literary value of the Bible, which has nothing whatever to do with the position of the Bible in Christendom, or talk largely and vaguely about the valuable moral lessons to be learned from the Bible. If they read a treatise on the Bible it is one written by men whose whole endeavour is to hide the truth about the book, and who carefully refrain from dwelling on its repellent features. They hardly ever read the Bible as it should be read—in the light of comparative mythology or as a study in primitive manners and customs. For this class also, the *Age of Reason* comes as a tonic. The moral earnestness of Paine, his simple straightforward manliness, his plain marshalling of positions against the essentially religious position of the Bible, strike the vague-minded believer in the Bible with a force that hardly anything else can.

A still more important class—if not a larger one—remains. This is the class that *knows* the truth about the Bible, but carefully refrains from stating it, and works hard to keep the old belief alive. Among these are the more intelligent and better-educated among the clergy, and men in all walks of public life. Outside the pulpit many of the clergy may be found explaining away the doctrine of inspiration, and admitting the inaccuracies of the Bible in many directions. But in general, in their sermons and in their addresses, they will be found referring to the Bible incidents as though they were matters of unquestionable historic fact on which no doubt has ever been cast. I must again remind the reviewer of the Coronation ceremony. When the Archbishop handed the Bible to the King, with the remark that it was the most valuable book in the world, that it contained the Royal Law, and that it was the "Oracles of God," was he not uttering either a deliberate lie, or using language in a "reserved" sense, while wishing it to be understood in another? Or if the King and the Archbishop, and many of the lords and commoners who took part in this ridiculous ceremony, really believed the Bible to be the "oracles" of God, how much have they moved since the days of Paine? An exhibition of ignorance, or an elaborately devised piece of hypocrisy? That is the choice. The *Age of Reason* will do a deal towards educating those on whose ignorance the Archbishop relies for immunity when making such statements.

It is the combination of these classes—represented in every strata of society—that makes the *Age of Reason* still of value, and for its purpose the most valuable popular essay one can have. For it is in

virtue of the policy of the two last classes that children are given a false impression of the Bible, and that millions of public money, in the shape of relief from rates and taxes, are given to Churches and Chapels every year. It is this policy that makes such things as reform of the marriage laws so difficult, that keeps sabbatarian laws in existence, and retains blasphemy laws in a professedly civilized country. Let those of the clergy who know, and those laymen who understand, say openly and honestly that we can no more safely take the Bible for a guide than we can the Koran, that the teachings of the Bible about the cure of disease, about the nature of God, the crime of disbelief, and so forth are of no greater validity than is the mythology of any primitive people, and life will be made better and cleaner.

But this our friendly critic doubts. He says that if you take the superstition of the Bible away from people they may turn to Hitler or Mussolini, or to some other political superstition. Well, I have too often dwelt upon the evil of the religious mentality transferring itself to the political and ethical field to doubt this danger. But suppose we reverse the argument and say that it is the worship of the "oracles of God" that makes and has made easy the transition of the religious frame of mind from religion to politics and sociology? I think that in that case (and it is a sober statement of fact) the justification for a very wide circulation of the *Age of Reason* becomes stronger still. It brings the mentally stronger back to reality, it opens the eyes of the pure Bibliolator to plain facts, and it cuts the ground from under such men as the Archbishop of Canterbury who trade upon the people in a way that would receive an ugly characterization from a judge, if it were practised in the commercial world.

* * *

Our Need of Paine

I largely agree that the *Age of Reason* will not arm anyone against the "competent modern apologists." No one expects it will. For "competent modern apologists" for the Bible means men who strive to make the Bible mean what it never did mean, and who by process of misrepresentation, suppression and by every device of the shady advocate, attempt to keep alive the general conviction of the Bible being the "Oracles of God." But the *Age of Reason* may, even so, prevent the people being fooled by these men; it may show them, merely as an historical document, what it was that these same "competent" apologists fought against more than a century ago, how scores of men and women went to prison for saying what the best of the competent apologists are now teaching, and it may awaken some to a recognition of the value of the competent apologists of to-day. They are at their old game. The breed runs true to type.

I do not dwell upon the untrue statement that Paine's style was "brutal," but it is a pity the reviewer cited the discredited evidence of Sir Leslie Stephen. I know of few controversial writers of Paine's day, either in politics or religion, who were, on the whole, as restrained. Let our reviewer compare Paine's language with that of most of his opponents, contemporary and post-contemporary, and he will at once see this.

But, after all, the complete reply to the criticism with which I am dealing is that Paine's work is still a "best-seller." There is no other Freethinking work that sells so steadily, and there is none that is so well calculated to destroy the basis, Bible-worship. I think that upon this point I am a better authority than is the *New English Weekly Reviewer*. It will reach the poorer type of Bible-worshipper, such as Sir Thomas Inskip, members of Bible Associations and

Bible Leagues, better than anything else can. I am of opinion that if every member of the House of Commons could be made to read it, very much good might be done in that direction. As to the parsonry, Established and Nonconformist—well, they will alter just as the better knowledge of the truth about the Bible makes their position more difficult and less profitable.

I am tempted to add something in the nature of a postscript to what has been said. I have hitherto taken for granted the *English Weekly* reviewer's estimate of Paine's criticism of the Bible, so that its value, from the critic's own standpoint, might be appreciated. But the truth is that Paine's *Age of Reason* is surprisingly free from ridicule, it brings a moral earnestness into its criticism of the Bible that had not been so strongly present with previous writers. It may safely be said that there is no religious critical writer of his day that outdoes Paine in gravity, and the forceful logic with which he pursues his examination of the Bible. Even Sir Leslie Stephen, who is cited by the reviewer against Paine (and who may usually be ranked with those heretical writers who appear to be more anxious to conceal their profound differences from orthodoxy by emphasizing their disagreement with the "style" of those fighting unbelievers with whom they are in substantial agreement than with making their own position clear) even Stephen admits that "Wesley from one side and Tom Paine from another, forced more serious thought upon the age." He also admits that Paine in his criticism of the Bible appealed to "genuine moral instincts." Biblical criticism actually owes a real debt to Paine, and honesty of religious controversy a still greater one. Paine did not fail in his criticism of the Bible. Whatever failure—contemporary and posthumous—he experienced was in securing greater honesty from the religious defenders of the Bible, and in rousing many who did not believe in the Bible to greater courage in stating their opinions. From the latter class we still get useless praise of the literary beauties of the Bible, etc., which is intended to serve no other purpose than that of warding off Christian hostility. And from the avowedly Christian side we get to-day an even larger measure of fundamentally dishonest interpretation than was current in Paine's day. In this direction the dishonesty of Christian apologists has become greater as their intellectual quality has become poorer. To both of these I think Paine's book still has its message. Contact with a vigorous, a sincere, and a fearless intellect, has its tonic effect at all times. Add to these facts the one that the Bible is still used as the great fetish-book, and it is plain that the *Age of Reason* has not yet taken its place with those epoch-marking books that have only an antiquarian value. It is still a living book. It cannot be suppressed. And it is still dreaded.

So now let us go ahead with the distribution of the *Age of Reason*. The parsonry hate it as much as ever. That is a really great compliment, and is a testimony to its value.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"Where's Yer 'Ospitals?"

"Christians are kinder than they used to be. Once, they burned their enemies alive; now, they only stab them in the back."—*J. K. Sykes.*

"WHERE'S yer 'ospitals and lunatic asylums?" is a very old jibe of Christian advocates, especially those speaking in the open air. And superfine sympathizers with Freethought sometimes assert that if social activities, as seen in the churches and chapels, were associated with Secularism the cause would benefit.

All these critics seem to have overlooked or forgotten the ideals aimed at by the National Secular Society, and it may be well to refresh their memories. Its objects are to dispel superstition; to spread education; to disestablish religion; to rationalize morality; to promote peace; to dignify labour; to extend material well-being, and to realize the self-government of the people.

This is a very lengthy and ambitious programme for any single organization, even if supported by large resources, which the National Secular Society does not possess. Freethought is a poor, struggling cause, its members are comparatively few and scattered; and it has no wealthy endowments to defray the cost of national propaganda. Still, the Society has kept the flag flying bravely for many years, and it has always managed to relieve its necessitous members. The Benevolent Fund has, during its existence, been well supported, and is, in all probability, the only fund which is administered without a solitary farthing of expense. Until a short time ago, it was not possible to bequeath money for Freethought purposes with any real prospect of the trust being carried into effect, as it was always in the power of the next-of-kin to invalidate the legacy on the ground that it was illegal. The famous Bowman Case altered this, but the Freethought Movement was robbed of thousands of pounds before this memorable legal victory.

Few people have any idea of the strain of leading a national movement. Two Presidents of the National Secular Society have died from the overwork and anxiety inseparable from such an onerous and thankless office. Despite the undeniable fact that the Freethinkers have compelled the clergy to refrain from thrusting their most repulsive dogmas on the public, the fight between Freethought and Superstition is by no means over. We have not yet succeeded in eliminating the clergy from our national councils, or from our schools and universities. In all these positions the clergy still wield enormous power. There are not wanting signs that the State-supported Anglican Communion and the powerful Free Churches may yet combine their efforts against the common enemy, and a revival of superstition may yet cause us need for greater vigilance and activity in the near future.

During Mr. Cohen's able administration Freethought propaganda has both broadened and deepened. In the days of Bradlaugh and Holyoake, Secularist audiences were almost entirely composed of men, whereas to-day, there are as many ladies as men. The literary and scientific appeal has been extended, as anyone may see by comparing the later issues of the *Freethinker* with the earlier, or by contrasting the present-day Freethought publications with those of the earlier period. Mr. Cohen's own books cover an enormous range of knowledge, and his leadership has carried the Society to a pitch of efficiency unknown to his predecessors in office. Thanks to his courage and devotion, heterodoxy is no longer the danger and disgrace it once was to the ordinary citizen. Later years have added respectability to Freethought advocacy, placed its exponents on a stronger platform, organized its forces, and justified its rights

Here then is a difficulty to which no other science presents anything analogous. To cut himself off in thought from all his relationships of race and country and citizenship—to get rid of all these interests, prejudices, likings, superstitions, generated in him by the life of his own society and his own time—to look on all the changes that have undergone and are undergoing, without reference to nationality, or creed, or personal welfare; is what the average man cannot do at all, and what the exceptional man can do very imperfectly.—*Spencer.*

to equal citizenship. Through the theological prejudices of our time a breach has been made large enough for the heretic to pass through in future, and in many other directions our lives have been made easier.

As for imitating the catch-penny social activities of the Christian Churches, our critics should realize that whilst charity is good in its restricted and narrow way, what the world wants is not gifts but justice. If the world were run on fair and reasonable lines, there would be no occasion for philanthropy to exist at all. Christian charity is largely a sprat to catch a mackerel, a worm on the hook. It is largely a bribe to the working classes to keep them in subjection, and to attract them into churches and chapels. In India and China and elsewhere, the missionaries lure the unsuspecting natives with medical dispensaries, and at home the clergy use the lure of coals and blankets, soup kitchens, children's nurseries, Sunday-school "treats," Pleasant Sunday Afternoons, and other attractions. The cash-box and the cassock have been always on the same side from time immemorial, and will be till the end of that sinister chapter in the history of man.

So long as wealthy men have "Surplus" millions of money derived from underpaid labour wherewith to found and endow churches and chapels, so long will the narcotic of religion be necessary to keep people quiet, and so long will thousands of places of worship mock the few lecture-halls devoted to Freethought. "Where's yer 'ospitals and lunatic asylums?" is a stale herring drawn over the area of controversy. Freethinkers need not trouble about this sneer from men "willing to wound, but yet afraid to strike." In common with their fellow-citizens they contribute to their support. Maybe, Christians have a special interest in lunatic asylums. If they subscribe to these institutions, certainly they send plenty of patients suffering from religious mania.

It cannot be too often emphasized that Freethought is not a religion, nor even a substitute for superstition. It is a frame of mind. It is not concerned chiefly with social reform as such; but is actuated by the pure love of truth, and is justified in bending its whole energies on the destruction of delusions, ecclesiastic and alleged supernatural. Its mission is to free mankind from ancient ignorance, and in so doing it is rendering a distinct service to the whole human race. Human nature does not need an alleged supernatural religion, nor does it need an other-world superstition. It does need to be freed from the shackles of Priestcraft and priestly control, and it will then adjust itself naturally to the real conditions of human life, material, physiological, and social. Although no ideal perfection may ever be attained, men will be much happier for having escaped the clutches and control of the priestly caste, which has battered upon humanity for so many centuries. To be loyal to truth is man's first duty, and from it all other duties will unfold. The proud motto of the National Secular Society is "We seek for truth." It is a symbol of the world's yearning after the dimly-apprehended ideal of perfectability; of its unquenchable revolt against the agonies and tyrannies of despotism.

MIMNERMUS.

A man who should labour for the happiness of mankind lest he should be tormented eternally in hell, would, with reference to that motive, possess little claim to the epithet of virtuous, as he who should torture, imprison, and burn them alive, a more usual and natural consequence of such principles, for the sake of the enjoyment of heaven.

Shelley.

Paraphrase

ONLY a few years ago it was easy to "check up" on the many misquotations rife in sermons. Ministers of the gospel have always displayed a queer ignorance of the Bible text. Incidentally too, they generally show a pitiable incapacity for understanding the logical interpretation of Bible language.

Nowadays ministers and others have an excellent "alibi." There are so many versions of God's "word," that immediate contradiction or correction is difficult. "What THE Bible says" may be merely what a certain strange "version" of the Bible claims that the Bible means or ought to say.

Even in our childhood young Christians were puzzled by the curious differences between the Psalms and Canticles as they appear in the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer respectively. Greater perplexities arose when the 1881 "Revised Version" appeared. We have lived to read more than a score of differing later "versions." It has come to this: we have one version inspired by the Holy Ghost and thus absolutely authentic; another version guaranteed by an Infallible Church; Revised versions of these two—still to win their spurs, so to speak; and in addition a whole lurch of unofficial and irregular paraphrases and so-called "New Translations."

The "Twentieth Century" Bible explains that it is "a translation into modern English from the original Greek." We need not take this preposterous claim too seriously. To all seeming it is a paraphrase in more or less colloquial English of the well-known text. For reasons we do not follow, the preface says: "A paraphrase might be useful, but it would not be the Bible itself," and that this is not a book of paraphrase but a regular sort of Bible. It certainly reads like nothing but a paraphrase. Let us illustrate: "If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean" (Mark i. 40) reads in this version: "If only you are willing, you are able to make me clean." It exactly answers all definitions of "paraphrase," so does the whole book. "Son why hast thou thus dealt with us, behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing" (Luke ii. 48) is "non-paraphrased" into: "My child, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been searching for you in great distress."

Dr. James Moffatt is the author of another "version," and he renders the first of the above passages thus: "If you only choose, you can cleanse me"; and the second: "My son, why have you behaved like this to us? Here have your father and I been looking for you anxiously." Moffatt's version is also called "A New Translation." Worse still, Moffatt refers learnedly to "the Greek originals," a phrase which is a misleading audacity taking advantage of popular ignorance.

There seems no particular gain in paraphrasing John the Baptist's impudent epithets: "Ye generation of vipers" into Moffatt's words: "You brood of vipers." Moffatt makes John the Baptist continue: "Who told you to flee from the coming wrath?" which is merely a slight weakening of the official version: "Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" Moffatt has no doubt done his best with many difficult passages, but it can only be cantankerous paraphrasing to offer for "beaten with many stripes" (Luke xxii. 47-48) Dr. Moffatt's "beaten with many lashes."

The "Twentieth Century Bible" in the last mentioned instance, substitutes "flogging" for "beat-

* The Douay Bible, 1609, and the 1914 revision of the Rheims and Douay versions, published by authority of the English Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster are used by Catholics.

ing," but agrees with Moffatt about the "lashes." In neither case does the paraphrase justify itself. The "Twentieth Century" uses "weeping and grinding of teeth" (Luke xiii. 28) as preferable to "weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth," omitting the "wailing." Moffatt goes one better and omits the "weeping," making the paraphrase read: "You will wail and gnash your teeth" so that colloquialists disagree.

The fastidious may be unreasonable enough to enjoy the "Twentieth Century" preference for "Manure-heap," but Moffatt thinks (rightly) that the old "manure" is as decent as the ancient "dung." But both versions appear to imagine that in the passage about the dogs licking Lazarus's "sores," something is gained by substituting "ulcers" for "sores," but this does not dispose of the repulsive "licking" which remains unparaphrased.

Dr. Moffatt declares, in his Preface, that the Authorized and the Revised official Versions of John i. 1. "In the beginning was the Word," is improved by being—to quote his word, "transliterated" into "the Logos" which Moffatt says "is less misleading to a modern reader." Imagine the comment of thousands of the old Theologians on such blasphemy! As Freethinkers we rejoice at the change. "The Word of God" in pious lips will never find a practicable substitute in a "Holy Logos."

The paraphrase is a valuable weapon, however, in the Christian armoury. It enables myriads of "cultured" "semi-sceptics" ("light half-believers," as Arnold called them) to continue preaching dogmas, which under their original name have long been exposed, ridiculed and scorned. The believer of to-day often differs from his pious ancestors immeasurably. But by terminological paraphrase he can pretend that "Christian harmony of the ages is undisturbed."

A clerical writer in the *Christian World*, recently was asked if he believed in "The Incarnation." He replied: "We surely believe that Jesus is God become man, but His spiritual vision was tintured conditioned and limited by the medium through which it came." No orthodox church will cast out a minister who "surely believes that Jesus is God" however "tintured" and limited." The old time minister had to toe the verbal line. To-day all that is asked is for the minister not to disturb old dogmas by direct attack. "Paraphrase it" is the motto to-day.

The Rev. Edward Vernon, writing "For Boys and Girls," tells them how "Mark Tells His Story to Children." He gives his paraphrase of Mark's gospel. Mr. Vernon, as a man of education, does not believe (as "Mark" and Christ believed) that a conversation can take place between devils inside a man, and a healer who can "cast out devils." (Mark v.). So he "paraphrases" it. Mr. Vernon says there was a "whole host of foul things in the man's mind," and with this kind of "reading," anybody can say they believe anything.

Edmund Burke said of the vile court of Louis XV.: "vice itself loses half its evil by losing all its grossness." It is easy enough to bamboozle people into thinking we have thrown overboard our abominable creeds when we have merely covered up their foulness with the paint of paraphrase.

Perhaps the best—or funniest—paraphrase recently published is to be found in a sermon on "The Persisting Wounds," by the Rev. Canon (Dick) Sheppard, D.D. Mary Magdalene—according to the reporting of John xx. 18, said, "I have seen the Lord." Dr. Sheppard's "paraphrase" deserves immortality. He says she said:—

But the dear Master was strangely aloof and distant and unapproachable. He is alive indeed, but

somehow He seems just a little different. I was not allowed to touch Him, I who used to minister to Him, and I fancy His hands still bore the imprint of those cruel nails.

And after all who invented paraphrase? We cannot exculpate the Divine Inspirer and Author of the Bible Himself. What are the numerous contradictions and variations in the stories told in the Word of God, but paraphrases or worse? It began with the two contradictory accounts of "Creation." It culminated in the four different stories (called gospels) which vary in telling how Jesus came into the world, what he did and said, how he lived and died, and how he left the world and when he is coming again. With such lofty examples it is easy to understand how Christians can regard as legitimate, paraphrases which distort or misinterpret what once were regarded as parts of the Impregnable Rock.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

The Recall to Freethought or Turning the Tables

RELIGIOUS beliefs have their origin, no less than disbeliefs, in Freethought. It is the basis of both Theism and Atheism. What is now regarded as orthodoxy in institutional religion is little else but a survival of the Freethought of bygone ages, much freer in the times when mankind found it easier to believe in the supernatural than the natural than it is at the present day, when it is confronted and restricted by scientific accuracy and historical research. It is, in fact, in religion that Freethought has played the freest hand, with the result that the world is crowded with contradictory creeds, and that rival claims to orthodoxy are found—as in Christianity—in one and the same religion.

But orthodoxy, in the sense of sound opinion, should be regarded as twin brother of science rather than of religion. There is nothing paradoxical in the position taken up here, if we compare matters of thought with matter of fact. Freethought is not wanted as a branch of science, because science concerns itself with facts and builds its theories upon them, whereas in religion there is a clear field for its activity.

Natural law just happens, like the weather! It neither rewards the just nor punishes the guilty. Its action is detached from humanity though it can be turned to human uses, and its detachment is even recognized by the editors of the synoptic gospels, in the words put more than once into the mouth of Jesus. And the knowledge we have of natural law is uninfluenced by Freethought. It is built up step by step, and confirmed or corrected, as time goes on, by the tests applied to it, and in so far as it passes these tests it may justly claim to be, as far as it goes, orthodox science. But as regards religious beliefs orthodoxy is a misnomer. Whether Theistic or Atheistic they are based on Freethinking, which is as much the prerogative of the Theologian and the Theist, as it is of the Agnostic and the Atheist.

Such common ground as this should tend towards unity, and bring home to Freethinkers of all persuasions (not excluding the Archbishop of Canterbury, nor even the Pope of Rome!) the case there is for following a lead often given by writers to the *Times* and forming a United Freethought Front against those who regard Freethinkers as a danger to society and little better than criminals. Probably the best way.

In Alice's *Adventures in Wonderland*, the Duchess remarks: "Everything's got a moral if you can only find it." In this case it is obvious. No religion can exist without Freethought, so the Editor of this magazine can exchange handshakes with the Editor, say, of the *Church Times*, and many others of that ilk as fellow Freethinkers.

MAUD SIMON.

Arthur B. Moss

THERE was time, last week, for but a brief notice of the death on August 1 of Mr. Arthur B. Moss, in his eighty-third year. He was one of the few remaining veterans of the fighting Bradlaugh days, and the older generation will feel that another living link has been snapped between themselves and the past. His close association with the Freethought movement began when he was only twenty years of age, and for some forty years he was widely known as a speaker on the Freethought platform. He contributed articles to nearly every Freethought paper during his life, and as readers are aware, he was an occasional, but ever-welcome writer in these columns. Of late years he has been unable to do more than write an occasional article to this journal, but he was a frequent attendant at meetings, and a regular and honoured visitor to the Society's Annual Dinner. To the end he remained a member of the N.S.S. Executive. His loyalty and interest in the movement was ever keen and unquestionable, and his services were devoid of any trace of self-seeking.

He took also a keen interest in social and political affairs, and in his earlier years entered actively into political work. He was the author of a number of pamphlets, and also wrote a number of plays, six of which were produced in London and the Provinces.

In connexion with his duties as an Inspector under the old London School Board, he became the subject of a petty persecution, which was, at the time, the subject of much discussion. He wrote a letter to a Mr. J. R. Kelly, M.P., asking him to support Bradlaugh's Oaths Amendment Bill. Mr. Kelly, who has been rescued from obscurity by his action, wrote to the Chairman of the School Board, asking for the dismissal of Mr. Moss. The Board could not do that, but he was prohibited from lecturing on Freethought. On advice, Mr. Moss ceased to lecture for awhile, there was a School Board election at hand, and after the return of Mrs. Besant on a Secular Education programme, the resolution barring their Inspector's appearance on Freethought platforms was rescinded.

A very familiar figure has gone from our midst. There clusters around his period the memories of great struggles and many acts of unrecorded heroism. In these Arthur B. Moss played his part to the limit of his capacities and opportunities. No one ever worked more single-heartedly for a great movement, and he lived long enough to see the fruitful results of the contests in which he bore so worthy a part.

The funeral of Arthur B. Moss took place at Forest Hill, Old Cemetery, on August 5. Very little public notice could be given, but there was a goodly attendance of friends present. After the coffin was lowered into the grave Mr. Chapman Cohen delivered the following address:—

We have met to-day to pay a tribute of respect to a brave, earnest, and consistent soldier in an army, the march of which has never been marked by ruined homes and mangled bodies, but which can be traced by the more reasonable happiness and the wider freedom it has brought to those who have been influenced by it. The members of that army have had few monuments of stone raised to commemorate its deeds, and they who seek visible signs of its influence can only do so by measuring what is with what was.

Arthur B. Moss was born just over eighty-two years ago, near the middle of the last century, at a time when political, ethical and religious dogmatism was firmly seated in the saddle, and when those who challenged established opinion ran the risk of boycott, social ostracism, and, not infrequently, imprisonment. In 1855, the

year of his birth, the echoes of the fierce battles of the 'twenties and 'thirties for freedom of thought, speech and publication were still in the air. Political equality was still denied on the grounds of religious differences, and the word "unbeliever" carried with it a suggestion of depravity that frightened the timid and induced an outward conformity that masked an inward contempt for conventionalism.

It was into this fight, conducted, on the one side, with a savagery that to many is now hardly understandable, and on the other with a defiant courage such as one would wish to see more of to-day, that Arthur Moss threw himself when he was scarcely out of his teens. To that fight for intellectual freedom he remained faithful during the whole of his long life. He had many other interests in life, he wrote plays, he was an occasional contributor to a great many reform and radical journals, he lectured on the political platform as well as on that of Freethought, he published a number of books and pamphlets, and took an active part in public and municipal life. It was, in fact, while serving on the old Camberwell Vestry that he ran a narrow escape of being elected a Churchwarden. And whatever office he held he never ceased to champion what he believed to be right or to attack what he considered to be false. But his constant affection was for Freethought. It was in connexion with this that I first met him, well over forty-five years ago, and it was this movement that held first place in his interests to the end. In this he showed a consistency and a persistence that cannot be too highly praised. He made no secret of his opinions, he offered no apology for them, he practised no evasions in expressing them. Like his great leader, Bradlaugh, he was an Atheist, and he said so, scorning all subterfuge and compromising language which induces many to say in whispers what they should cry out loudly and decisively. Like Kingdon Clifford, he believed that if Christianity were true it should be shouted from the housetops, and if it were not true, that should be shouted from the housetops.

When one adopts this straightforward mental attitude one makes many enemies, but one also makes many friends, and as one who speaks with authority on this point, I can say that among those who knew him, his name was greeted with every mark of respect and even of affection. He did not seek this, but it was there. It was the guerdon that a simple sincerity and an honesty of intent and character win from those who are susceptible to the better side of human nature.

Arthur Moss lived a lengthy, an honoured, and an honourable life, and when a man dies at the age of four-score and three, it is idle affectation for us to pretend deep grief. The man has lived his life, he has done his work, and will be remembered by those who knew him for the work done. With his family and with his intimates the break is there; they have the sense of absence of a loved figure and of a loved voice. This is as it should be. But those who wish to pay to Arthur Moss the respect he deserves will not use the fact of his death as an occasion for voicing either empty, meaningless platitudes, or for perpetuating mistaken fears and idle superstitions. The picture of death as something that casts a shadow over existence is a false one. Death is in sober truth the seed plot of most that makes life livable and lovable. The mother love that hovers over the cradle, the affection that brings together two people in the most intimate of human relations, the friendship of men and women that endures during life, all are fundamentally based on the fact of mortality, and would wither to nothingness in the face of a demonstrated immortality. We do not mock grief with cant. We know that our sorrow at death is the price we pay for possession, and we cannot abolish one without risking the loss of the other. Here, again, we stand with Kingdon Clifford, "We do not say, Let us eat, drink and be merry, for to-morrow we die. Rather do we say, Let us take hands and help, for to-day we are alive together."

And now the time has come for us to pay a final tribute to one who with tongue and pen played his part in the warfare against superstition and injustice. I have said a final, tribute, but I would withdraw that expression. Our farewell is vocal, our tribute is personal, but beyond that and greater than that is the tribute that human society pays, even though unconsciously, to its benefactors. The final tribute to Arthur Moss lies in the

better society he was helping to build, and in what he did to end those senseless fears and superstitions that have hung like a spasm in the heart and a cramp in the intellect for so many generations. That is a tribute which cannot be put in words, but it is the tribute that life pays to all of us or withholds from us, as our actions become embodied in a wider, cleaner and happier social existence.

Some of you may remember the very wide-spread primitive custom that when a great man dies, every member of the tribe places on the grave of the dead hero a stone, and for long after all passers-by do the same thing, until there is raised a huge mound as a memorial to the dead. But each stone, be it big or little, forms an integral part of the whole. Big or little it is an integral part of the monument. So it is with men such as Arthur Moss, so it is with all who play with distinction a part in life. Our individual contributions form part of the general stream. The little goes with the big, the small with the great, the contribution of the ordinary man and that of the greatest genius all go to form part of that mass of human effort we summarize as progress. And if it were possible to measure in that accumulation of human striving that makes for betterment, individual contribution, I am sure that a ready recognition would be given to the work and influence of Arthur B. Moss.

So to-day I add my tribute, and the tribute of those here to one whom I always found a faithful friend, a loyal comrade, and an unselfish worker in a cause that calls for unusual qualities of mind and character. Arthur Moss leaves behind him a record of which his family may well feel proud.

Acid Drops

Judged by what it should have been, the new Matrimonial Causes Act is a very poor thing. But Mr. Herbert had to fight strong religious prejudice, and only those who have the courage to face this—an enemy from which most people shrink, and are ready to make terms with at the cost of principle—know how bitter and how unscrupulous it can be. There is no other fundamental objection to a reasonable correction of an ill-judged marriage than the weight of religious prejudice. The objection to divorce placed in the mouth of a mythical Jewish bachelor of some two thousand years ago, is permitted by the semi-civilized religious fanatics of to-day to weigh against a measure of social adjustment that is backed up by common sense and by every consideration of justice.

One consequence of the new Act will be to permit the divorce of a number of people who ought on every consideration of justice and social welfare to have been divorced long ago. They were divorced long ago in fact, but without legal sanction. But a section of the religious world is already crying out about the increased number of divorces that will follow the passing of the Bill, and also pointing out that the number of judges will have to be increased. But it was to meet this extra number of cases that the Bill was passed, and if the number is large, that furnishes a justification for the measure rather than an argument against it. If this increased number of cases are genuine, it is only a fresh justification for the Act. If they are cases of people who ought never to have been married at all, that is evidence of what little effect religion has in inducing a happy and desirable type of marriage. On either count the religious sanction stands condemned for inefficiency. The fact is, of course, that the religious ceremony of marriage has nothing whatever to do with the moral character or quality of marriage. The origin of the religious marriage lies in an entirely different direction. But that is too large a subject to be treated in a note.

Meanwhile the religious bigots have gained one thing from the Act, and that concession the champions of the Bill ought to have resisted at all costs. But most of them were, as usual, afraid openly to oppose religion. Under this new Act a clergyman is relieved from marrying a

divorced person if he does not wish to do so. And this introduces a new principle into English law. Under English law an official who is appointed to do a certain thing *must* act. He cannot stand on one side and refuse to do that which he is appointed to do. In this case the State first of all licenses a parson to perform marriages, then it says, in the new Act, "of course, if you do not care to carry out the function for which you are appointed, you need not do it." To get a complete parallel one need only imagine a local Council that refused to clean the drains, carry out the Education Act, etc. They would be ordered to carry out their duties, and in some cases might be penalized for refusing. Under the law as it stood, we believe that an injunction might have been obtained from a high court ordering a parson to perform a marriage; under the new law a parson may refuse to act. He is appointed to do a certain thing, he is paid for doing that thing. But he refuses to act, and takes the money for doing that which he is paid for doing and licensed to do. Twenty years ago we forced the London County Council to repeal a resolution (the case was connected with freedom of meeting) because they had decided not to act. The court declared this was bad law, and the Council was compelled to act. By the new Bill the clergy are made licensed law-breakers. The promoters of the Matrimonial Bill may yet discover that to have stood firmly by a principle might, in the long run, have paid better.

It is not only in the Marriage Bill—which has now become law—that the Church has had a set-back; the latest figures dealing with marriage itself show that something like 20,000 more people get married in register offices each year than was the case ten years ago. Most of them would, of course, call themselves Christians, but the fact that, in spite of religion, they no longer want the Church's blessing on their union proves to what extent the secular ideal is slowly but surely penetrating our daily life. Baptisms in church are also less frequent, and more people are cremated without a religious burial service than ever. In the past the Church came in at the birth, saw that the children were confirmed, officiated at the wedding, and undertook the burial of almost everybody. All this made the Church a power in the land—as well from the financial point of view as from the religious. And the power in both is now waning. No wonder the Archbishop of Canterbury wants a "recall" to religion. We wonder whether he is satisfied with the response.

The accommodating policy of the Roman Catholic Church with regard to divorce is seen in the case of the late Senator Marconi. He was married twice. But when he sought a divorce, it was explained that, at the time of his marriage before an Anglican minister, in 1903, an agreement had been arrived at between Marconi and his bride, that if they found after marriage they could not agree they would seek a divorce. Now Father Sharpe, S.J., explains that when Marconi sought a divorce about 1927, this arrangement was made clear. Therefore the Diocesan Court of Westminster decided that owing to this arrangement the marriage was void, *ab initio*, and the marriage was annulled. There had been no "true" marriage. That is quite convenient. The Roman Church grants what is called in the secular courts a divorce, but calls it an annulment. The secular courts grants an annulment, but calls it a divorce. That is a very important difference—to the Church. The "annulment" is said to have cost Marconi £25,000. It would have been cheaper in a divorce court, had there been grounds enough.

"Our Lady," probably tired of always appearing at Lourdes, takes a stroll in other directions every now and then. Her latest appearance is in Italy, at a little village called Voltago, where she appeared to five young shepherdesses. The news spread rapidly, and more than 10,000 people and 200 priests came upon the scene, with the result that serious accidents occurred and a motor-coach was overturned. It is probable that these accidents made the local Bishop more than a little sceptical, as obviously "Our Lady" could not possibly bring anything so unlucky in her train. So he interrogated the young

shepherdesses, discovered that what they had seen was pure hallucination, forbade the pilgrims to visit Voltago, and in fact acted exactly as unbelievers do towards similar visits from "Our Lady." But had a little of this modern scepticism been brought to bear on Lourdes, what enormous loss in revenue to the Church would have taken place! Even scepticism can be carried too far.

Fr. de Ternant blessed 60 cars, vehicles, and bicycles, the other day. Of course he was careful to point out that "no mere sprinkling with holy water, nor the utterance of sacred words will render a car immune from bumps and smashes. The Catholic Church does not deal in vulgar magic." Then of what earthly use is the blessing? How does a blessing affect a car or a bicycle? Fr. de Ternant also pointed out that a St. Christopher medal, or even a statue, was no good as a mascot as the "Catechism forbids us to put our trust in such-like tomfooleries." Really the way in which unbelief is pervading the Church almost takes our breath away. One would imagine from this that there was no longer any virtue even in beads, holy water, or religious amulets, the sale of which has helped Church revenue for centuries. As a matter of fact, in this particular case the priest actually told the various drivers that immunity from accidents depended more on their careful driving than on the blessing! If this does not prove that freethinking is making headway even in the Roman Catholic Church, we should like to know what does?

Speaking at the Annual Festival of St. Stephen's House, Oxford, the Bishop of Derby, Dr. Rawlinson, admitted that "the present generation is out of touch with the Biblical world of ideas." His remedy for this complaint is—new "translation work," with the apparent object of maintaining all the old superstitions, but under new aliases, making old untruths true by giving new names to them. Even of this jejune effort the Bishop predicts that "the process is dangerous." Calling a tallow candle by a new name does not increase its illuminating powers, but it may be "dangerous" enough to burn down the House of God.

Dr. Butterworth, in the *Modern Churchman*, has been analysing the Christian Creeds and St. Paul's insistence on Christ being "Lord" (our Lord, and even THE Lord) Dr. Butterworth frankly draws attention to the notable fact that "neither the moral character of Jesus, nor the love of God are ever mentioned in any of the Creeds." In fact, as far as the creeds are concerned, "there might be danger of confusing the Person they refer to with Mithras or Osiris." Dr. Butterworth quotes Nestorius and Eutyches, typical of the beliefs of most of the early Christians, whose view was that "if Jesus was God, what need was there for Him to be anything else." In other words, it is an utterly fallacious assumption that theology has any sort of moral content or implication. This is not Dr. Butterworth's conclusion, but it is an obvious deduction from the facts.

Mr. B. C. Boulter has written a new Biography of an early Bishop of Lincoln, Robert Grosscete, described as "the greatest English Ecclesiast of the Middle Ages." The Rev. Gamaliel Milner makes this significant comment in reviewing the book:—

Perhaps one reason why churches were better attended in the Middle Ages than they are at the present day was, that the proceedings there were occasionally of a more sensational character than those to which we are accustomed. There was probably, for example, a good congregation when Henry II. was scourged by the monks at Canterbury; the prospect of a red-hot sermon against the Bishop by a Canon Residentiary would be likely to draw a crowd in any Cathedral city at the present day. On this occasion the incident had a sequel which was possibly miraculous and certainly brought down the house.

"Were we to be silent," he exclaimed, "the very stones would cry out for us!" Hardly had he uttered the words than the tower collapsed through the roof. Three people were killed.

A writer in the *British Weekly* brings himself to discuss a subject which has puzzled generation after generation of true believers. Many a Christian with the "Will to Believe" has been worried by the unanswerable doubt as to how on earth Christ's Sacred (and often Silly) words have come down to us in the verbatim reports so glibly transcribed in the New Testament. The *British Weekly* writer actually uses the phrase "verbatim report," and would have us believe that the difficulty is overcome by pretending that the gospel-writers merely put into a single discourse a series of talks which took place on various occasions. Except for this slight heresy, the writer dares to say, "I see no reason why all the rest should not have come straight from the lips of the Master." We should like to see the shorthand notes of the reporters who HEARD the words Jesus uttered when He was alone in the Garden of Gethsemane, or when only the Devil and He were chatting on top of a pinnacle of the Temple!

The Rev. Principal Whale has a remedy for Italian and German Totalitarianism. He harks back to the happy past when all civilization was under the heel of the priest. "The Church," he says, "has to rediscover its classic past . . . meeting the false totalitarianism with the true totalitarianism of Faith." Well, there is nothing new in tyranny creating new tyrannies. The vilest of monarchs in days of absolute monarchy, found encouragement in religion, in the widespread worship of the Absolute Monarch of Heaven, the King of Kings, who to-day might equally well be called Dictator of Dictators! No wonder the Rev. Principal notes that "Roman Catholic and Puritan Fathers of the Church" were at one in this sort of Totalitarianism. We quite appreciate Dr. Whale's horror expressed in his words: "To despair of God is not only blasphemy, it is Atheism!"

That is exactly what we said in our "Views and Opinions" recently, although, we admit with a little different implication. "God" is only, after all a hypothesis, and when experience has taught man that it is a hypothesis that explains nothing and does nothing, what else is there for sensible men and women but to give it up. And the upshot of this is Atheism. We venture to rewrite Dr. Whale to the extent of saying that "To find out that the hypothesis of God is useless is to reach an enlightened Atheism." We wonder whether we are warranted in so far complimenting Principal Whale as to hope that one day he may reach that stage.

It is announced that in Eastbourne and other seaside resorts the Churches have altered their time of Sunday evening service in order not to clash with the hotel dinner hour. The poor parson! In order to get a congregation he has to consider the convenience of cyclists, motorists, the impatience of people with lengthy sermons, the dislike of many to dress up in sober Sunday garb, and now he had to make sure that he doesn't get in the way of the hotel dinner. If Jesus comes again, it looks as though he will have to finish his first sermon before the Movies begin.

Fifty Years Ago

THE report on the Examination in Scripture Knowledge at the London Board Schools has been published. The examiners hint that the teachers are not generally devoted to this part of their work. Backward children are, we are glad to notice, often placed apart to continue their secular studies while the others are taking their Bible lesson. The report supplies an amusing instance of the curious lessons derived by children from Bible stories. Among the answers to the question, "What lesson may be drawn from the story of Herodias?" were the following: "We should not give parties." "We should not dance." "Men should never marry widows." The best moral of the story of the princess who danced off the head of John the Baptist, was that of a little girl—"If we try hard we shall get what we want."

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTÉ

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

T. SMITH.—We can only admit letters provided they comply with the following conditions. They must be brief, and of a nature that will be of interest to readers, or offer a correction to something that has been said. Merely to explain that we are foolish, or cowardly, or unfair, is of no great interest. We may take all these things for granted.

F. WITTY.—Grants of land from the crown, and gifts to the Church from those anxious to buy safety for their souls are mainly responsible for the land owned by the Church. Some are cases of just land-grabbing, which were once quite common. Tithe was originally arranged so that a third should be given in charity. Gradually the Churches decided that charity begins—and ends—at home. We do not know of any special study of the Archbishop of Canterbury, but one need only look at his eyes to recognize his nature, and one may remember his tactics with regard to the abdication of Edward VIII.

C. H. THOMAS.—Mr. Cohen has not decided how many the *Pamphlets for the People* will run to. At least twenty, most probably more. We are glad to say they have won very wide appreciation and are having a large sale. Many of our readers are ordering quantities for distribution.

G. SPEED (N.W.6).—Thanks for your commendations. You will know how to make good use of any extra copies of the paper that come your way.

S. GRIFFIN.—Try and cultivate a little better understanding of human nature, and then you will cease to feel a need for a supernatural explanation of ordinary acts of kindness and consideration from one human being to another.

W. H. KENT.—Letter held over till next week. Crowded out of this issue.

G. TODDUNTER AND E. SMEDLEY.—Next week.

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

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

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

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

We are indebted to our old friend, Mr. R. H. Clifton, for the report of Mr. Cohen's address at the grave of Arthur B. Moss, which appears in another part of this issue.

In 1888, Mr. J. M. Robertson wrote a carefully documented examination of Sir Leslie Stephen's treatment of Thomas Paine. In this work he examined the statements made by Sir Leslie in his *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, and, on that head, left little for others to say. We purpose republishing the salient parts of the criticism in these columns. The first instalment will appear next week.

The *Daily Herald* informs us that Philip Thornton, a young musician, was sent to Rome to broadcast for the B.B.C. an account of the canonization of two English martyrs, Sir Thomas More and Bishop Fisher. The following information was not broadcast:—

During the interval between the canonization and the Pontifical Mass he left his seat and walked round behind the papal throne.

"A few yards from where this most sacred ritual was being completed I discovered a crowded subterranean snack bar, complete with sandwiches and drinks.

There stood ex-King Alfonso and a host of European notables smoking and chatting away as they might be seen in the foyer of Covent Garden. The bar was rapidly filling with members of the Diplomatic Corps, many of whom made obeisance to Alfonso and his deaf-and-dumb son standing with him. Across the doorway to this happy scene there hung a thick leather curtain lined with red druggut. On the other side of this insulation the service continued. No sounds from within the snack bar penetrated the curtain."

Christian prejudices seem to effect the Editors of popular British journals more than the editors of American magazines of large sales. A recent issue of the *New York Liberty* has an article on the Greatest Fools in History. It compares favourably with the Beverley Nichols articles which appeared serially in an English monthly ("The Fool Hath Said"). The *Liberty* article seriously argues that the title of Fool is merited by such characters as: The housemaid who destroyed Thomas Carlyle's *French Revolution* manuscript; Louis XV.; Bishop Theophilus the Christian fanatic, who began the destruction of the Alexandria Library; Caliph Omar the Moslem fanatic who followed Theophilus; Shah Jehan who taxed his people to provide funds to build the Taj Mahal Tomb; the Grand Inquisitor who forced a recantation out of Galileo; the soldier who killed Archimedes; King George the Third; and "the greatest of all fools, the fool who instigated the Children's Crusade." It is interesting to find that the writer omitted certain Biblical characters because as he says, "I am dealing only with historical facts."

Bolton will have a return visit from Mr. Whitehead, who will lecture every evening during the week beginning to-day (August 15). Mr. Whitehead has many friends in Bolton, and with the co-operation of the local N.S.S. Branch, a series of successful meetings should result, at which full opportunity for the disposal of our literature ought to be taken. The new pamphlets, issued by the Pioneer Press, are well calculated to arouse interest in the Freethought position, and lead to further enquiry and study.

We have all heard the phrase "A calculated lie," which means that one sets out to tell a lie with a full perception of its nature and consequences. There is also what one may call a calculated truth, which carries an exactly similar meaning. At any rate we give one Methodist minister, the Rev. A. J. Norman, the credit for telling a calculated truth in a letter to a Methodist journal, when he says with reference to the faith-healing crusades:—

The real danger of this healing movement is that simple-minded people may think that clergymen, by virtue of their office, can exercise miraculous powers not possessed by doctors and postmen and chimney-sweeps, and announcements of healing services to be held in Churches are likely to foster this entirely erroneous and presumptuous idea.

This is exactly what we have said many, many times. And as any doctor who understands his business knows that in most illnesses hysteria plays some part, every doctor must practise, to some extent, faith-healing. And faith in him and his coloured medicines do exactly what faith in Jesus does in other instances. As Mr. Norman rightly says, it can be practised by anyone—what is required is the faith of the subject. Then anything—Jesus, a Saint, the hair from a Saint's whiskers, or a toenail from his foot, serves. What we have in the case of most of the faith-healing parsons is "calculated" imposture. We feel sure that Mr. Norman is in for trouble from his "calculating" brother parsons. He lets the cat out of the bag.

We are asked to announce that the West Ham Branch Outing will take place on Sunday, August 22. The train leaves Waterloo for Kingston-on-Thames, at 10.20. a.m. Cheap day fare, 1s. 4d. return; lunch to be carried. London Freethinkers are invited to join the party.

Freethought Activity in Russia

[The following account of Freethought activity in Russia will be of interest to our readers.—E.D.]

THE Constitution of U.S.S.R. assures and guarantees full freedom of conscience. Nobody has the right to interfere with the believers praying, or performing religious rites of baptism and funeral. The Constitution, however, leaves any citizen the right to carry on anti-religious propaganda. This propaganda is carried on, first of all, by the organization of the Union of Militant Atheists. Its activity consists precisely in agitation, propaganda and enlightenment. Some idea about its activity will be gathered from the figures given here below.

The Atheists deliver a great amount of lectures and reports among the population. For instance, in April last the Leningrad Council of the U.M.A. carried through over 1,600 lectures; the Moscow Council of U.M.A., over 1,200; the Regional Council of Odessa, over 1,000 reports.

The lectures are given on the following subjects: "The Stalin Constitution and the Tasks of anti-Religious Propaganda"; "Science and Religion"; "The Heaven of Religion and the Heaven of Science"; "Who are the Modern Sectarrians?"; "The Origin of Religion"; "The Origin of Christianity"; "Religion and Fascism"; "Religion as a Weapon for Preparing a New War."

Lectures are delivered at factories, works, clubs, collective farms, soviet farms, railwaymen's settlements, etc. The lecturers are of different profession, such as scientists, doctors, philosophers, editors of reviews, students of upper university grades, teachers, workers, etc. For instance, Ivan Stepanidko, a peasant, 60 years of age, member of the Lenin collective farm in the region of Voroniesh, delivered, in the course of two months—April and May—four lectures with discussion on the harm caused by religion. The result of his lectures was that 15 peasants joined the organization of Atheists. Courses of different type are created for the training of lecturers. The program of these courses includes the following subjects: "Materialism and Idealism"; "The Teaching of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin about Religion and how to Fight for it"; "The Stalin Constitution and the Questions of anti-Religious Propaganda"; "The Origin of the Universe"; "The Descent of Man"; "The Origin of Religion"; "The Origin of Christianity"; "How the work of the U.M.A. should be organized," etc.

In Moscow they carried through, in the course of 1937, 15 courses; 10 courses are working now.

At regional centres they have one month courses with an extended programme. Such courses have been carried through in several regional centres. In Kiev and Moscow exist courses for the training of highly-qualified lecturers. They last two months, and admit only experienced lecturers graduated from universities. Eight different problems are studied there, among them: Dialectic Materialism, Natural Science and questions of Atheism, The History of Religion and Atheism, etc.

The radio is employed widely in the Atheistic propaganda. The Moscow Komintern Station regularly broadcasts anti-religious lectures.

They often organize a general listening-in of lectures at the collective farms; i.e., anyone who likes to come is welcome to attend them at the fixed hour. Sometimes an exchange of opinion follows such lectures, and collective letters are written with an appreciation of the report, or with questions arising in consequence.

The spreading of Atheism naturally leads to an organizational strengthening of the Union of Militant Atheists. For the first half of 1937 about 540 district conferences of the U.M.A. took place. Local congresses were held in a number of regions.

The presidium of the Central Council has adopted a resolution to introduce secret votes at the elections, to begin from the leading workers of the lower cells, up to the members of the Central Council of U.M.A. of U.S.S.R.

These are but a few facts illustrating the activity of Atheists in U.S.S.R.

Central Council of
Union of Militant Atheists in U.S.S.R.,
Moscow, Sretenka 10.

The Friends of God

EVERYWHERE the Church of Christ is up for alterations and repairs. Clerics of every brand inform us that the Religion of Christ has been mistaken by the pious theologians who came before, and that every day it is becoming *better understood*. Not that this reflects any discredit, mind you, upon the Giver of the Revelation. He knew exactly how much of the Truth was good for man. The judicious lie had been adjudged a necessity by Him who Sitteth in the Heavens. He knew the man that he had made in his image wasn't ready for the Truth, so he gave him lies, and every politician and every journalist when he reads this clerical apology, smiles inwardly, knowing himself justified.

Mistakes, mistakes, mistakes, all mistakes! It was a mistake (says Dr. Alington), for mankind to have listened to Calvin as they did, and thus given such strength to the Freethinking attack. It was a mistake (said Farrar), to have listened to Jesus when he spoke of the Pit, and the Lake of Fire and Brimstone. It was a mistake when he said: Woe unto you Rich. It was a mistake to think that God was pleased with Abraham and Jacob, and to think that that Model Scoundrel, David, was the Man after God's Own Heart. It was a mistake to think that the Bible was the Word of God in the sense of it being an inerrant volume. It was a grave mistake to have accepted the Pauline Theology, based on the fact that in Adam all sinned and merited damnation. It was a mistake to have believed in the Resurrection of the Body (says Dr. Matthews). It was a mistake (says Revd. Weatherhead), to have thought of Jesus as the Man of Sorrows, when the fact was that, at the jovial spread, no blither soul than he. It was a mistake to think the Kingdom of God was not of this world; it was by becoming public-spirited that one took the first step towards being really and truly religious.

All right then. We have been misled, seriously misled. Who is it that has done the misleading? Is it the cleric? Is it Calvin, Knox, Newman, Wesley? Or, is it God?

God is omniscient. He not only knows what he has revealed, but to whom he has revealed it. He knew the conclusions that would be drawn from his revelation. In spite of this he preferred the revelation that would not only defer the day of truthful outlook, but would for generations put mankind on the wrong scent. If, as a *Times* writer has recently explained, the Christian religion is now being *better understood*, it is clear that it has been the opinion of God that, up to now, it has been better for mankind

that they should try their prentice hands on this business of living with a bundle of lies at the background of all their conclusions.

It is a pity that this theological special-pleading should have been let loose at the time of the *Recall to Religion*. This synchronization in time is, one is afraid, calculated to make the gentleman sitting in the seat of the scornful to lean back and make himself still more comfortable. Why should he do anything save scoff at this frantic effort to save one or two of the Oracles of God? Why should he think that Inge, Matthews, Weatherhead and Co. are any more right than Whitesfield, Hooker and Baxter? Why indeed? There were marks visible on the countenances of Hooker, Browne and Selden, which, if the truth must be spoken, are much more impressive. Are not those to-day rustling the old garments, as Emerson pointed out, but apes and players?

Occasionally we see a cold douche administered the Theologian dabbling in Plasticine. The Very Rev. Dr. Ryan, for instance, has just been speaking in Limerick. He said something very trite, and very true.

The Church did not exist to solve the unemployed problem, or the financial problem. Her essential mission was to bring Souls to Heaven.

There is Wisdom. The business of the Church is Soul-Saving. For this there is all evidence; all History. Live so that at the end of life you may find yourself in the celestial choir. Take the Sacraments, attend Church, make Confession, revere God's Holy Men, cultivate a wholesome fear; and a niche in Abraham's bosom is reserved for you. Neglect these, and no matter upon what social activities you may have spent your energies, for you there is the Lake of Brimstone. This is Christianity as delivered to the saints. This is the Christianity that is being outgrown, and all the papal big drums and pieces of scarlet will not be able to keep it alive.

One lesson emerges from reading the progressive policies of the Matthews and Alingtons. It is Man that keeps God up to date. Well, have not Freethinkers always said so? God Proposes but Man Disposes. If the religion of Christ is being better understood, has the better understanding come from within the Church or without? There is only one answer to this, so palpable that it needs not the stating. From those cursed, spit upon, boycotted by the Church and by those clerically disposed, has come the GREATER UNDERSTANDING. The way the Church has disposed of the objections of the Wicked Infidel has been by accepting them. In this way, we are informed, it removes the Unbeliever's fangs, and makes him appear to be ridiculously futile. This much is sun-clear: From the Modernist's premises, God has been well served by the Freethinker. In days of old, God was friendly (for want of anyone better), with Abraham; he loved Jacob, the prototype of all smart businessmen, and David was the man after his own heart. Now, it is clear, the men after God's Own Heart are the Freethinkers, those who insist on throwing light on unswept corners, those who care nothing for their souls but try to bring more smiles into the world. These are the ones who have understood more than the coped, chasubled, petticoated cleric, with prayer-book, bible, hymn-book too. The line of Progressive Revelation, it would appear, is the line that these men have trailed. To this confusion it must come at last. Let us hope, if it be true that we are now becoming the Friends of God, that He is now devising a punishment for us that fits the crime.

T. H. ELSTON.

Problems of Chronology

I.

Of the many aspects of religion, and particularly of religious history, which have been dealt with in the columns of this journal, not much reference has been made to chronology. It is a very difficult and complex subject, and rightly requires an expert in mathematics, or a specialist to deal with it. Indeed, it has been left largely to the specialist, and his findings have been accepted almost without question. This is particularly the case with religious history. For centuries the dates given in the margin of our Bibles were looked upon as divinely infallible—as true as God's own Word; and though there have always been writers demurring, if ever so little, at the date given to the Creation, for the most part this was accepted with all the other dates.

Lately I have been amusing myself looking up the question in our encyclopedias, and particularly in one or two of the books devoted to the subject of chronology; and my little investigation has been somewhat in the nature of an eye-opener. The whole subject of chronology is, at least before the beginning of printing, in a chaotic state. Most of our dates are taken for granted from "authorities"—though why some of these people are called authorities is as much of a mystery as the subject itself.

Personally, I have always been puzzled as to the readiness with which many of our historians accept dates given in what they admit are fabulous or legendary histories. How far can our Anglo-Saxon chronicles be accepted? How much truth is there in Geoffrey of Monmouth? How much in the history of our own Kings and Queens before, let us say, Richard III., has been really verified? Who is responsible for a good many of the dates given in the accounts of their lives which have come down to us?

Most dates on our very old charters, deeds, and similar documents, if given at all, are in Roman figures and not in our present Arabic ones. In fact modern figures seem to be a comparatively late innovation. Certainly the early Arabic figures are little like the present ones, and it seems to have been centuries before the latter came into popular use. Many of the older dates, also, are not given as an Incarnation date, but as the year of a particular sovereign's reign; and though, of course, the real date may be reckoned, it is easy to see that we have taken a great deal of history—as far as dates are concerned—on trust. We have been too ready to agree that the figures must be right because we are told so.

In this connexion let us look at the way in which our modern dating was initiated. In accordance with almost all our works of reference, the "Year of Our Lord" was fixed by Dionysius Exiguus, but not only is very little known of this gentleman, but the references to him seem to have been copied from each other. The generally accepted account is that he was a monk of Scythia, who proposed, somewhere about the year 532 A.D., that Christians should date all their events from the year of Christ's birth. He fixed this year as 1 A.D., Jesus being born on December 25, in the 753rd year from the foundation of Rome. "But," says one account, "as the Roman year began with January, it was considered too inconvenient to have the Christian year beginning on a different date, and so it was decided that the beginning of the Christian era should be reckoned on January 1, 754 A.U.C., which, to Christians, henceforth became A.D. 1. Therefore the first year of the Christian era is not the year of the birth of Jesus, but the year after."

However, when modern historians began to com-

pute and collate various dates in ancient history, they soon discovered that about the only date on which Jesus could not have been born—if he ever was born—was the year 1 A.D., or even the previous year. For if Herod died as the "records" show—but do they?—in the year 750 A.U.C. Jesus must have been born before that. How much before is still being discussed, for no one knows. The dates given vary according to "authority." Dodwell, for instance, places the birth in 6 B.C., Chrysostom 5 B.C., Usher 4 B.C., Irenæus 3 B.C., Jerome 2 B.C., Tertullian 1 B.C. If Luke is accepted, then, unless he got mixed up about the Roman Governor Cyrenius and the date of his governorship, the date of Christ's birth should be 7 A.D.—though this is by no means certain either. It may be added, in this connexion, that whatever the date selected, December 25, as the day of the month, is given up by almost all modern "biographers" of "Our Lord." Farrar, Adam Clarke, Geikie, and other "authorities" are unanimous that December 25 could not be the day of the month.

But to come back to Dionysius, what exactly do we know about him? On what "authority" do we get his story? It is true that some Latin authority is given in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, but I should very much like to see a real investigation as to whether this can in any way be relied upon. F. F. Arbutnot, in his *Mysteries of Chronology*, says "there is no evidence as to how the legend about him was first put into circulation." The great Christian chronologist, J. J. Scaliger (1583), quotes the legend "without any attempt at criticism." It seems to have been accepted as the easiest way out of the difficulty.

The famous Jesuit, Father Hardouin (1646-1720), however, says Arbutnot, "contemptuously rejected the statement about Dionysius Exiguus"—as he did quite a lot of Church "history," a good deal of which he claimed had been simply invented or forged by the Benedictine monks. Hardouin would probably have said a great deal more, but he was a Jesuit and a priest, and had to conform to his Church. The Benedictine Fathers themselves seem, in later editions of their famous work on verifying dates in history, to have been rather dubious about Dionysius.

As, of course, is well known, there were, in ancient times, two cycles—lunar and solar; the lunar extended over a period of 19 years, while the solar's period was 28 years. If 28 is multiplied by 19 you get 532—just the date coinciding, says Arbutnot, "with the alleged discovery or invention of Dionysius Exiguus." The truth is, no one really knows how the present dating originated. It was invented or computed by someone somewhere, and we have all accepted it almost without protest. Only the fact that Herod's death occurred at a fixed date in Roman history has shown Christians that Dionysius was wrong in making the Incarnation 1 A.D.

The dates given by Usher in his Bible chronology are, of course, completely given up even by those whom we regard as Fundamentalists. The date of the Creation, 4004 B.C., is the Hebrew one; but both the Septuagint Version and the Samaritan Pentateuch give different dates for that momentous event. In fact, even the *Catholic Encyclopedia* admits that there are 200 dates given for the Creation, none of which it wants to vouch for. On the contrary, it says that "the literal interpretation of Genesis has now been entirely abandoned; and the world is admitted to be of immense antiquity." In fact, "the Catholic is quite free to follow the teaching of science." I have an idea that the average thorough-going Catholic does not know this; or, if he does, he is told that he is free to follow the teaching of science only when science is in harmony with the Church.

But there are many other equally amusing admissions on Bible chronology by more or less orthodox experts. I shall deal with them in subsequent articles.

H. CUTNER.

Intuition: Inspiration and Revelation

To the making of books there is no end, and philosophers' books are no exception. Neither is there any end to their fundamental disagreements as to the nature and powers of the mind. One of these powers is that of "intuition," or the direct perception of some "relation," or of one or more facts; although such facts be neither "proved" by the reason, nor ascertained by "experience" from sense-impressions; but are known (as philosophers say) a priori.

What are these facts? As we have suggested, there is no agreement; but, for our part, we take our stand on the doctrine of Locke, Hume, Kant (sober) and Karl Pearson, that the mind merely manipulates the impressions supplied to it by the senses. It perceives a priori, or by intuition, certain relations among the impressions, viz., Contiguity (Co-existence and Succession) and Resemblance (including Difference). Kant (not quite intellectually sober) adds to these—Causation, and a dubious kind of indirect intuition (through the "practical reason") of God and Duty (the "Categorical Imperative").

Inventing words to define the sense-impressions, the mind has the power of classifying, arranging, combining, re-arranging and re-combining these sense-impressions, or the "ideas" derived from them; also, by generalization and abstraction, of arriving at conceptions—apparently far removed from the things of sense—such as Love, Wisdom, Good, Evil, Duty, etc., which throughout the ages have been mistaken for "innate ideas," or "intuition."

There is one other factor which (in spite of difficulties) we think must be allowed to be perceived by intuition, viz., our own existence. When Descartes said, "I think, therefore I am," he forgot to analyse or define the "I." Hume says—"we are nothing but a bundle of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement." In *Materialism Restated* (p. 34) Mr. Cohen quotes Democritus as saying (in effect)—"Give me existence, and I will build a world," and (p. 58) "Existence as such, is the common datum of all." In spite, therefore, of the difficulty of finding a solid basis for personality, we think that the intuition of existence must be granted to that "Something" which thinks, and which Descartes calls "I."

Having thus laid our cards upon the table, and defined what we believe the just limits of "intuition," we have now to glance at the fatal results, throughout history, of ignoring those limits.

First, let us note that Revelation is the child of Intuition. Sentences, pages, and even books, have been compiled or dictated by "inspired" seers, prophets, mediums, etc.; who are believed to have had the very words revealed to them by intuition.

Naturally, these two principles—Intuition and Revelation—working separately or jointly, have been the Trump Cards, or favourite gambits, for Superstition and Religion throughout the ages. Shrewd "promoters" saw a "cash value" in them, and no "business proposition" has ever paid better dividends.

"For long ages," says Mr. Cohen (id. p. 25), as far as men thought about things, their conclusions were

fundamentally wrong. Gods and ghosts were the prime movers. They were everywhere. It was the golden age of religion, and human life stood as a parenthesis between the ghost out of which it came, and the ghost into which it went."

The precise order in which these weird ideas appeared and developed has been the subject of much controversy; we do not think there need be any hesitation in attributing the stabilization of the ideas to the activities of magicians and medicine-men who—quicker-witted than their fellows—could not fail to note the economic advantages to be gained by their exploitation. The effect was to provide the multitudes with an unlimited number of new intuitions. No doubt we have all listened to the confident assertion of a "believer"—"I'm just as sure of the existence of God, as of my own existence." The same believer would never suspect that he was merely placing himself on an intellectual level with countless millions of his savage forefathers, who were just as sure of the existence of their grotesque gods, as they were of their own existence.

The savages were duly followed by semi-civilized men—Egyptians, Semites, Aryans and others—who still retained those fatal obsessions. The Buddha, Confucius, the Milesian Greeks, made a cautious start on a better road; and Leucippus and Democritus laid well and truly the foundations of a saner philosophy; but against these we have the formidable names of Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato with their satellites and successors.

Later, we have the imposing systems of Judaism, Christianity and Mohammedanism—all based on "revealed" Scriptures; the bulk of the philosophers, poets, and serious writers of all nations; all the mysteries of every faith, or none; all would-be respectable folk everywhere; the series culminating in Newman with his "illative sense," Eddington with his "inner light," and Bergson with his thesis that intuition alone can grasp "reality," which intellect only falsifies, "because there is no reason to suppose that it can throw any light on the profounder riddles of existence."

"These, then, are they" which have invented or maintained gods and ghosts; angels and devils; with "sacred writings" to "secure the patents" of their inventions. One and all they rely, in the last resort, on the simple device of extending *ad lib* the just and proper limits of "intuition."

Science is a body of knowledge obtained by the study of our sense-impressions—their resemblances, sequences, differences, etc. That study, amazingly extended—and to be further extended—by the use of mechanical aids to our senses, is very far from being complete. Obviously, if we had more and keener senses, we could learn more of Nature's secrets, and thus extend the limits of intuition. It is possible that there are, or have been, abnormal individuals with senses exceeding in number or quality the normal five. Cardinal Newman, with his "illative sense"—if he really had it—would be a case in point; but in reply to his ascription to us of a similar endowment, we can only say that "we are quite well, thank you! We have the usual number of senses, and fear that if we had any more, we might find ourselves in a Mental Home." Any claims of like nature to Newman's must stand or fall by scientific tests; and we should advise anyone making them to consider himself in the position of that disingenuous hero of Mr. W. W. Jacobs, who was recommended to "shew that 'ead of yours to a doctor."

It is much the same with the extension of the limits of intuition, whether by spiritists or spiritualists, to admit "literature" from the Beyond. You may indeed shiver when ghosts are about, and mistakenly

place the cause of your discomfort outside of space and time; but when it comes to your being made the mouthpiece of literary drivel from the same quarter—well, common prudence would suggest mental treatment!

And all the time we must remember that thought is wholly (or very nearly so) dependent on words; that words are of the earth, earthly; and that after the most determined efforts to purge the ideas they stand for of the dregs of "sense," those ideas remain the products of "sense," and are redolent of the aroma of space and time.

Finally, we would urge that your intuition, if it differ essentially from ours, is *personal* to yourself alone. If it emanate from a source outside of space and time, you cannot communicate it, in words, to others. The "inner light" which *you* see, neither will nor can enlighten anyone else.

G. TODHUNTER.

Life's Chief End

THE layman with the clerical mind is very much in evidence in the press these days. But, though that is so, it is wise not to overrate his importance numerically or influentially. The vast majority of newspaper readers endure him; but they do not cut out his effusions and paste them in scrap albums. When a fire is waning to its end it will sometimes send up a bright flame before expiring—just as in the case of many a dying man, there will, shortly before death, be an apparent but deceptive glow of health; and a period of exalted feeling of restoration. But the flame dies down—a greater weakness sets in—and the embers become a mass of cold ashes. So with the Church.

A Mr. William Power has been trying to cheer the faithful in the columns of the *Glasgow Daily Record*. He declares that the Church is but ourselves in our spiritual aspect, "as slaves of superstition and dogma or as brave exponents of sweetness and light." Tut Tut, Mr. Power, you must not deceive yourself with exalted golden dreams and imagery. It is much more to the purpose to get down to brass tacks. In an historical retrospect Mr. Power feels bound to make some vital admissions. Thus he speaks of the "dubious" record of the Church in regard to social matters. But he proceeds to observe that "when forced by stress of circumstances to scrutinize its mandate, it finds it must stand for world peace and spiritual freedom." Why does "freedom" need to be qualified by this adjective "spiritual," and what is the significance of the adjective to the writer? He does not say. And when he speaks of "ourselves" being the Church, he must be reminded that there are many of "ourselves" who decline any association with the Church, and repudiate its claim to possess any valid "mandate" to control their lives either "spiritually," intellectually, morally or physically. As its "mandate," he can have nothing else in mind but the Bible; and criticism and research have shown that that book has no higher authority than the sacred books of any other religious faith that has imprisoned the mind of man. If all faiths but one are wrong, how is it to be proved that that one is infallibly right?

On one side Mr. Power ranges Dictatorship and the Totalitarian State; on the other the Christian Church. This is a misrepresentation of opposing forces—like Mr. Power's misrepresentation of Voltaire. Clericalism is still "I. Infame" to those of us who appreciate its calamitous and disastrous effects. By it a supposedly "sacred" set of men are set apart as revealers

and exponents and interpreters of the will of an Almighty God, whose own existence is as yet unproved.

But the most entertaining sentence in Mr. Power's article is this: "A Church which is under the control of a ruling class and says 'Ditto' to the State has ceased to be a Church." Surely it is clear that Dictators, supporters of the Totalitarian State, and members of the ruling and employing classes are often professed believers in the supernatural! The big Church has never yet said "Ditto" to the State; but the State unfortunately too often says "Ditto" to the big Church! It is a very easy way out to range on one side Dictators and the Totalitarian State, and on the other the Church as opposing forces; but the matter is more complex than such a course implies. The Church stands firstly and essentially for Supernaturalism, and the opposing force to supernaturalism is necessarily naturalism. Don't let us have any more of the humbug about a "Natural Religion"! The phrase is a contradiction in terms. But finally the whole matter must be adjudicated upon in terms of money. For without that no great Church can continue to maintain its influence. This is no doubt abhorrent to such rebellious parsons as Dick Shepard, but the reforms he advocates are demonstrably unacceptable by the Church of England, because the doctrines and propaganda of that Church (in common with other State Churches) are determined by the wealthiest members of it. They pay the piper and they will no doubt see to it that they also call the tune. The Church may not say "Ditto" to the State; but the Church says "Ditto" to its wealthy members who are its backbone, and who furnish the sinews of war. The civilizing and elevating influences of Christianity are too readily assumed by unthinking people, who do not take the trouble to dig beneath the surface. It is notorious that the clergy generally proclaim that economic reform is no part of the work of the Church; but, as every sociologist realizes, it is the economic condition of the world which calls most loudly for readjustment. The fact is that the Church is surely getting adrift and out of touch with questions really vital to mankind. The removal of injustice does not concern it!

Mr. Power seems to find much consolation and charm in a sonorous phrase, e.g., "organized tribal heathenism"—whatever he means by that! It sounds very menacing to the faithful no doubt; but can he give illustrations of it? The representatives of Christianity have had ample opportunities from age to age to establish freedom; vindicate justice and remove human ills; and here is Mr. Power far in the twentieth century searching for the "hope of freedom!"

Mr. Power has been bemused by an evening service in Paisley Abbey, and this article of his is the result. The sermon affected to condemn the erection of "spiky walls of dogma," and advocated "concentration on simple essentials." Who can make non-committal and fine sounding phrases like the parson? As Mr. Power concedes, the Christians of Paisley not so long ago burned five witches. Notwithstanding, he says that Paisley Abbey "seemed to stand less for the romantic past than for the testing future into which we are moving." Why? He does not say. Anyway, we have had far too much generalizing. The "tasks" of the Church are all up in the skies. But the Humanist on earth wants to see adequate steps taken to fill hungry people's bellies. Feeding them on rhapsodies is irrelevant and infuriating. The Church has not only failed: it has nothing definite to propose for the relief of the oppressed and the swindled millions. There is far too much mouthing about "freedom" and "brotherhood." The

Church does nothing to see that every man gets a fair deal. What is its conception of "freedom"? And of Truth? When such questions are put the ecclesiastics can only refer the questioner to the obsolete ethical systems of their sacred books. The chief end of the life of man is his own self-elevation, whereby he can enter into a happy heritage of mutual love: and drink in for his nourishment all the beauty of nature. But, primarily, his body and mind must be afforded proper food and exercise.

IGNOTUS.

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