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Views and Opinions

Politics and Religion

I do not know what religious opinions Major C. R. Attlee holds. But Major Attlee is the leader of the Labour Party in the House of Commons; he hopes that one day the Labour Party may be returned in sufficient numbers to form a Government, of which Government he would be—if he retained his present position—the head. One may assume, therefore, that in his general activities, he has an eye on his own political future, and on the electorate. I can assure Major Attlee that I am not saying this in any deprecatory sense, but as a plain statement of the fact that politics has its own rules—as have other things—and that in this country it is not usual for politicians to do anything that may tend to upset the professedly religious portion of those who exercise the franchise. In science the question is: What is the truth? In politics it is: What will bring votes? Moreover, politics is naturally the field of compromise. The politician, with the best of intentions can only do what is possible towards getting what he desires. He must balance what is possible against what is desirable, even in the matter of letting out the truth. In the world of science the sole rule is, "What is the truth?" There is, or ought to be, no room for compromise. The man with executive power must compromise. That is his sphere of operation. The teacher has no concern with compromise. His job is to speak the truth, and nothing but the truth. I am not blaming the politician; I am merely explaining him. I complain only when the politician goes out of his way to misrepresent, and compromises where compromise is unnecessary.

* * *

Socialism and Christianity

I think that what has been said will help a reader to understand the following passage from Major Attlee's just published, *The Labour Party in Perspective*. Discussing the growth of the Labour Party, he says:—

Leaving aside Owen and the early pioneers, I think that the first place in the influences that built up the Socialist movement must be given to religion. England in the nineteenth century was still a nation of Bible readers. . . . The Bible is full of revolutionary teaching, and it is not surprising that, in a country where thought is free, many men and women have drawn from it the support which they needed for their instinctive revolt against the inhuman conditions which capitalism brings. I think that probably the majority of those who built up the Socialist movement in this country have been adherents of the Christian religion—and not merely adherents, but enthusiastic adherents of some religious body. There are probably more texts from the Bible enunciated from Socialist platforms than from those of all other parties. Not only the adherents of the dissenting bodies, whose less privileged positions incline them to take a Left Wing in politics, but also many clergymen and laymen of the Established Church found that the Capitalist system was incompatible with Christianity.

From an historical point of view the above passage is very weak indeed. It ignores all notice of that continuity of thought which an historian should trace. From a sociological point of view it is bad because it takes no notice of those determining factors that are at work unconsciously moulding men's attitudes towards life. It is of value from the political point of view only, because it may hoodwink people into believing that Socialism is a religious movement, which receives its greatest inspiration from Christianity. To Abraham Lincoln's dictum that you cannot fool the people all the time, the politician might reply, "I don't need to; the next one or two elections may be enough."

* * *

The Pioneers

Take first of all the historical aspect. "Leaving aside Owen and the early pioneers." Why? Was there any other reason than that if the pioneers had been introduced, their non-Christian, and even anti-Christian opinions were so pronounced that the dullest of readers could not have failed to see that the co-operation of Christians was mainly accidental to the development of the Socialist movement? What of the influence of Paine, whose writings served as the inspiration for the reformers for the first thirty years of the nineteenth century? And of Owen, who spent a fortune in trying to create a spirit of independence among the working classes? Was it because his opposition to Christianity was so pronounced that it went so far as to say that all the religions of the world were so many forms of geographical insanity? What of Carlile, of Hetherington, of Southwell, of Holyoake and the Co-operative Movement, of Francis Place, of Detrossier, of Cooper, Hardy, Bamford, Godwin, Lovett? And what of the Chartist Movement? In all these movements the greatest spirits at work were men who were well-known either

for their disbelief in Christianity, or for their hostility to the Churches. On the other hand, right through the times we are considering, the established religion had been openly against almost every movement to better the condition of the labour world. And as to Dissenters, it was the dissenters among the dissenters who played a part in the encouragement of the working classes to better their legal and social position by political action, and did so, nearly always, against the expressed wishes of their leaders. The Methodists, for example, from the outset did what they could to keep their members from taking any part in political action.

Nor ought one to leave out of sight the influence of Sabbatarianism. Sunday represented the one day in the week in which the working-classes could meet to discuss their problems, to listen to speeches on the need for better conditions, and plan concerted action—to say nothing of exercising the opportunities for purely cultural development. When all is said and done it is probable that the historian of the future may consider the influence of Sabbatarianism as one of the greatest obstacles to working-class development during the first half of the nineteenth century.

It is probable that Major Attlee might reply that he was considering the modern Labour Movement. If so it would be a very, very shallow way of dealing with a great subject, and a very false way of presenting history to unwary readers. But for the work done between 1792 and 1848, would the Labour Party be in existence? For in one way and another the development of the Labour Movement was continuous during the whole of the nineteenth century. It was "Owen and the early Pioneers" who laid the foundations of the modern Labour Movement. It was the working-class papers such as Hetherington's *Poor Man's Guardian*, that kept the hope of better things before the people, not in the name of the Bible or of Christianity, but in that of human rights and human decency.

If Major Attlee leaves much to be desired on the question of history, he is still more wanting from the standpoint of sociology. He might have left out all mention of religion, but with the religious voter in his mind he was tempted to throw out the religious sprat in order to catch the mackerel of a majority vote. But introducing the meaningless, stupid, or false statement that the first place in the Socialist Movement must be given to religion, invites the criticism I am offering. *The Labour Movement was the product of the work of Owen and other Freethinking pioneers.* That work did not die, it lived on in the example it offered, in the spirit it evoked, in the fact of things achieved, and in the possibilities of greater things ahead. I invite Major Attlee's attention to this passage from Mr. and Mrs. Hammond's *The Age of the Chartists* :—

The Chartist movement, like Owen's movement, was imagination in action. And when Chartism flickered out, this force was not lost. It went into different movements like the movements for education, the movement for public health, the Trade Union movements, the movement for public health, and the later movement for the franchise. Long after the great project of 1848 had collapsed amid the relief and ridicule of London, the virtue of the Chartist movement was by these means building up the self-respect of the English workman.

And the later influences such as the work of Hyndman and Quelch with the Social Democratic Federation, the work of William Morris, also a Freethinker, the work of Robert Blatchford in his earlier years, Bernard Shaw and the Fabian Society with its long list of non-Christian and anti-Christian writers and workers. Did these men and movements

build on religion and Bible quotations? An historian would have seen the importance of these events; a sociologist would have traced their continued and enlarged existence in later movements, and both historian and sociologist would have seen in the past movements what John Stuart Mill properly called "the victory of the vanquished." The politician hastens to disown these men and women, or belittle them, in view of catching the votes of an uninformed electorate.

Of course there were Christians in all these movements, and, of course, they used distorted Bible texts. But again, the impartial historian would have recognized that new thought has always to some extent followed along old lines, if only in the form in which it finds expression. In a Mohammedan country reforms often find expression in the language of the Koran, but I do not imagine that Major Attlee would argue that the reform was founded on the Koran, nor would he argue that because some Mohammedans helped in such reforms their reforms were based on the Koran. Major Attlee would certainly not argue that because some Capitalists are in favour of shorter hours and better conditions for workpeople, that their desire is bred by Capitalism. It is a pity that he is not struck by the fact that the evils against which Socialism, new and old, has been fighting was developed by religious people, defended by religious people, and reform obstructed by religious people. One wonders what Major Attlee makes of the teaching of the New Testament, that it is the duty of the servant to obey his master whether the master be good or bad, that the powers that be are appointed by God, and that whoever disobeys them deserves damnation. Or of the glorification of weakness and the New Testament promise to make all things good in the next world?

* * *

Under which Flag?

I have space for only one other consideration. If I understand at all what Socialism means, it is that the study of Society should proceed along the lines on which science proceeds. There are the factors of living beings inheriting certain institutions, habits, acquired knowledge, inventions, and so forth, there are the qualities of men and women as mere forms of animal existence, there are the questions of geographical situation, climate, natural resources, relations to other social groups, etc. Of course, one has to count on the existence of religious beliefs, but these, while affecting action, are again to be considered in the light of their origin and history. But in no case does any system of Socialism with which I am acquainted depend upon the power of prayer, the intervention of deity, or the working of a miracle to bring about the desired social change. Nor does Major Attlee, while apparently ready to exploit the religious opinions, base his own sociology on religious factors. So I put it to Major Attlee, when he says that it was religious influences that built up Socialism, does he mean that many who believed in religion found themselves so affected by the operation of normal forces as to begin to work for Socialism, or does he mean that the majority of those who work for Socialism really owed their belief in Socialism to an unconscious acceptance of religious doctrines? In the event of the latter, how will he explain the fact that Socialism and Freethought were until quite recently in close alliance on the Continent, and that also some of the clearest-headed men and women in the Socialist Movement in this country, found it possible to formulate a theory of Socialism without the slightest reference to religion—except that they often did refer to it as an influence hostile to the growth of a genuine Socialism? If, however, Major Attlee be-

believes that Socialism is a theory that is independent of all religious beliefs, resting upon an understanding of human faculties and on the operation of economic forces, would he not be doing his duty as a leader of Socialism if he said quite plainly that they who attribute their Socialism to religion are labouring under a misunderstanding of its nature, and it is by understanding its real nature that Socialism will be more surely realized? To the future of a movement there may be something of greater consequence than the winning of an election. To adapt a New Testament saying, I ask, "What shall it profit a Party though it gain an election, and fail to make the people realize the real nature of that for which they are striving?"

In conclusion, I hasten to remove a possible misapprehension. Major Attlee's book does not all run on the level of the passage I have criticized. Apart from this, the book is a well-considered essay which most may read with profit. I have been concerned with a passage that is historically ridiculous and scientifically absurd. And I am of opinion that a sociological doctrine that is dependent for its acceptance on the ebb and flow of religious feeling is not worth anyone bothering about. The part I have criticized is of less than two pages in extent, and the book would have been better for its omission. I suggest that if there is a re-issue, Major Attlee should either omit the passages cited, or do justice to those who fought for social reform when it brought neither social nor other profit.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Next Best Thing to Do

"Unscrew the locks from the doors!"—Whilman.

ONE of the most pressing needs of the Freethought Movement is additional publicity. It has often been pointed out that the Movement suffers from a deliberate boycott which is applied by Christians in the newspaper press, periodical literature, and at the municipal and private libraries. With a few rare exceptions, Freethought publications are ignored in the former, and kept out of the latter. Hence it becomes increasingly necessary that every Freethinker should assist actively in the propagation of the literature of the Movement. Christian organizations spend annually tens of thousands of pounds in furtherance of their creed, incidentally, no small part of their sinister propaganda consists of the vilification and misrepresentation of Freethought. A glance at the capacious catalogues of such organizations as the Religious Tract Society, the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, the Catholic Truth Society, the Christian Evidence Society, and the many similar institutions which cater for the orthodox public, will be sufficient to show how complete are their methods, and how large their success. All these hundreds of books, periodicals, and pamphlets, are distributed by the ton throughout the English-speaking world, and they penetrate into countless homes where Freethought works are never seen.

The clergy are past-masters at circumventing any movement likely to endanger their huge vested interest, and they have rare noses for heresy. The original Sunday-schools were initiated by laymen with the sole and laudable idea of imparting education to poor children on the one day in the week on which, in the dark days prior to the passing of the Factory Acts, they were free to receive it. Nowadays, Sunday-schools are not concerned with other than purely theological instruction, and the average Sunday-school teacher is but a cat's-paw of his clerical

pastor and master. Similarly with the public library movement, which was originated with the laudable idea of bringing the world's best literature within reach of the poorest. The clergy, of whom there are forty thousand in this country, have enormous influence on the local committees of these municipal libraries, and their one and constant aim is to render such institutions, from their narrow and priestly point of view, absolutely harmless and innocuous. So long as the shelves of these libraries are stocked with love stories, sensational novels, and biographies of noodles and notoriety, they are quite content. The instant any attempt is made to place before the public works which make for sanity and real knowledge, they at once display their antagonism. The boycott is introduced, and the modern *Index Expurgatorius* contains the names of practically every author worth reading from Bernard Shaw to Upton Sinclair. None of the "intellectuals" escape, and Robert Blatchford suffers in the august company of Eugène Brieux and Chapin Cohen. So far as I know, there are only a very few libraries in the whole of England where there is no restriction in the supply of books.

With the idea of remedying this state of affairs, Freethinkers should ask for definite Freethought publications at the libraries they frequent, and see that they are requisitioned and supplied. An excellent beginning could be made with any of Mr. Cohen's numerous volumes, and with V. Phelips' *Churches and Modern Thought*. In special cases, books might actually be presented to a library, but care must be taken that the volumes are not placed on a top shelf and forgotten. So far as pamphlets are concerned, it is perhaps better to hand or post them to likely readers. Orthodox persons are often interested in controversial literature, and such introduction may mean that regular readers of Freethought publications are obtained. Remembering that, in spite of a most rigorous boycott, many thousands of pamphlets are already in circulation, it must be apparent that, with the additional publicity, these figures may be largely increased in the near future. Literature should also be sold at all indoor and open-air meetings, and the sale entrusted as much as possible to the ladies of the Movement, who will thus find an outlet for their energies.

With regard to the *Freethinker* itself, it is useful to order this paper with other publications, so that the tradesman is faced with the dilemma of accepting or refusing a good customer. Another timely suggestion is for Freethinkers to join in any likely discussion in local papers. These organs often give far more space to readers' opinions than the vaunted "national" newspapers. Letters should be terse, strictly to the point, and courteous, and should be written on one side of the paper only. Back numbers of the *Freethinker* should never be wasted, but passed on to fresh readers. If these few hints are acted upon by our readers, it should prove beneficial to our Cause.

Freethinkers must see to it that Freethought publications get increased circulation. Humility may be a rare and fragrant virtue, but Intellectuals cannot surrender their rights at the behests of the clergy, however gaudily dressed. Let Freethinkers everywhere insist on their rights, and not only show that they are grateful for the work of the brave pioneers who did so much in the past, but that they are determined to extend their principles far into the future. For, unless the liberty of man, woman, and child, is guaranteed, Democracy is nothing but a sham and a delusion.

MIMNERMUS.

God's Red Patches

"In the same day shall the Lord shave with a razor that is hired."—*Isaiah* vii. 20.

THIS, being interpreted, means that the Lord will execute his vengeance by means of alien mercenary troops. It does not mean, as a casual glance may suggest, that the Lord, when he intended to shave himself, would have recourse to the hire-purchase system. It simply indicates that instead of exterminating or discomfiting a nation by his own Holy Generals, or by earthquakes, or by fire, or by flood, (Acts of God), he would, for reasons best known to himself, bring in outside human agents. Things happen even unto this day on such lines, and it is a method much known, understood, and commended, by the *Daily Mail* and other popular journals, who give evidence of having studied the Divine Model carefully, and having walked with God up to that point which allows circulation to remain unimpaired.

The "razor" simile is a good one. It suggests slashing methods, and the ways of the Lord were slashing or nothing. Modern warfare, with its healthy aversion to namby-pambyism, finds everything that is admirable in the methods of the Father of Jesus. When one appreciates this, one can understand why, in most of our journalists, there exists this passion for religion. God's Book is the Modern Military Man's Vade Mecum. One need not go elsewhere. For sound, practical advice on Massacre, one need never go outside of God's Holy Word. God in his efforts to inculcate a passion for righteousness in his images had recourse to "frightfulness." To bring a Holy People into existence he knew there was only one way. Those who would not hearken unto the voice of the Lord their God would receive a sample of the Lord's Mercy, which in quires and places where they sing, we are assured again and again, every Sunday, in every Church in this land, endureth for ever.

This is the thoroughly modern way in which those who would not hearken were to be visited:—

The Lord shall smite thee with a consumption, and with a fever, and with an inflammation, and with an extreme burning, and with the sword and with blasting and with mildew: and they shall pursue thee until thou perish. . . . The Lord shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed. The Lord shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies: thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them; and shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth. And thy carcase shall be meat unto all fowls of the air, and unto the beasts of the earth, and no man shall fray them away. The Lord will smite thee with the botch of Egypt, and with the emerods, and with the scab, and with the itch, whereof thou canst not be healed. The Lord shall smite thee with madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart: and . . . the Lord shall smite thee in the knees, and in the legs with a sore botch that cannot be healed, from the sole of thy foot unto the top of thy head.

Those who want more of this kind of thing are referred to the Twenty-Eighth Chapter of Deuteronomy. It will repay reading. Those who are invited to *Taste and See how Good the Lord is* cannot do better than begin on this chapter.

It is an unsavoury business calling attention to the bloodiness of the Old Book, but it must be done, and the reproach of Bible Banger must be borne with serenity. The task is uncongenial and tiresomely repetitive, but clerical methods are so dishonest that

it is from Freethinkers only that the public can get the facts; and so the work must be continued.

We are told that the Midianites had been a good friend to Moses when he fled for his life from Egypt. But this counted for nothing in the sight of the Lord:—

The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites. . . . And they slew the males. . . . And the children of Israel took all the women of Midian captives, and their little ones, and took the spoil of all their cattle, and all their flocks, and all their goods. And they burnt all their cities wherein they dwelt, and all their goodly castles, with fire. And they took all the spoil, and all the prey, both of men and of beasts. . . . And Moses was wroth and said unto them, Have ye saved all the women alive? Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him. But all the women children, that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves. (Num. xxxi. 1-18)

Similarly God massacred the Amalekites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and all the uncircumcised races which stood in the Israelites' path.

God's razor was called into action on innumerable occasions to accomplish the act known as "cutting off." This means putting to death. Christians pretend otherwise, but the text from Exodus xxxi. 14, 15, shows what a hollow, if characteristic, pretence this is:—

Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

A man gathered sticks upon Sunday.

And the Lord said unto Moses, the man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp.

God's razor slashed when a man failed to keep the Feast of the Passover; when he ate fat; when he ate blood; when a man was uncircumcised; when he imitated God's Holy Ointment or God's Holy Scent; when he killed cattle and forgot the portion of God's Holy Men; when he touched a holy thing; when he came too near to the holy candlesticks; blasphemed the name of the Lord; and when he approached too near God's Holy Men during Divine Service; as well as for hundreds of other ecclesiastical offences. God saw red whenever his ceremonies were threatened. When Uzza touched the Ark of the Lord in order to steady it (for the oxen stumbled), he committed the type of crime that is unforgiveable. So God cut him off.

It would be unfair to call attention to the red, blue, or yellow patches in the Bible, in order to give the impression that they were representative of the bulk. It is in the same way unfair to call attention only to the purple patches. The All Purple school is indeed grossly unfair, for the process is but a trick towards gaining acceptance for an important theological idea, that idea being that the Bible is other than a human book. There is room for all colours in a human book, but there is no room for any other hue than purple if God himself is the author. The insistence on All Purple means that the cleric will not allow the Bible to be treated as any other book. It is as an All Purple volume that the Bible gets into the Schools, and the All Purple to a child signifies God. The cleric does not wish the Bible to be treated as is the *Koran* or the *Revelation* vouchsafed to Joseph Smith—on its merits. Hence the necessity for the Freethinker perpetually to insist upon the existence of other colours in the volume. For those who pretend to search the Scriptures and find all Wonderful, who

can read of one bloody and holy infamy following another bloody and holy infamy and affect colour blindness, one can feel little but contempt. These people would have one believe that the dozen chapters of genealogical tables at the beginning of Chronicles are replete with beauty and utility, that Slaughter is sacred, Immorality is ideal, and Filth is fair to look upon. All can be gauged by the standard of a few passages in *Isaiah*, *Corinthians*, *Job* and the *Psalms*. This is not a literary judgment; it is simply Clericalism. When general opinion as to the Bible is purged of its clericalism, then it will be time for Freethinkers to change their methods. But that time seems far distant. They can hurry the process on by pulling away the many veils that the dishonest and the interested keep in position to obscure the vision; and so allow the entertaining old volume to tell the plain truth in its own ingenuous way.

T. H. ELSTOB.

Thomas Paine: An Investigation

[The following essay on Paine was published in 1888. It has for a long time been out of print. Recent discussions on Paine justify its re-appearance.]

(Continued from page 550)

PEOPLE who are scrupulous in weighing testimony may feel that even this is not decisive proof that Paine never in his life drank to excess; but it will probably satisfy even the majority of Christians as to the untruth of Cheetham's assertion, reproduced by Mr. Stephen, that Paine was a habitual drunkard. Is it necessary, further, to disprove the slander as to the habits "filthy beyond all powers of decent expression"? I will not quote the beastly gossip on which the decent Mr. Stephen founds his phrase, but I will quote again from Mr. Conway:—

Paine was described by Aaron Burr, hypercritical in such matters, as a gentleman; and the sense in which he was so may be understood from a passage in one of Lord Edward Fitzgerald's letters from Paris to his mother: "I lodge with my friend Paine; we breakfast, dine, and sup together. The more I see of his interior the more I like and respect him. I cannot express how kind he has been to me. There is a simplicity of manner, a goodness of heart, and a strength of mind in him that I never knew a man before to possess" (*Art. cited*, p. 409).

It is not for a vindicator of Paine, answering Mr. Stephen, to conceal any known facts; and I will mention that in the literature of the subject there is one piece of evidence as to Paine's having been in one short period of his life somewhat careless of his domestic amenities. A Mr. Yorke, who knew Paine in England, published in 1802 a volume of *Letters from France*, in which he tells how he visited his friend after he had been released from imprisonment. He was received by Paine in a room, not a bedroom, which he describes as exceedingly dirty, the only details given being, however, that:—

the chimney hearth was a heap of dirt; there was not a speck of cleanliness to be seen; three shelves were filled with pasteboard boxes, each labelled after the manner of a Minister of Foreign Affairs, *Correspondance Americaine, Britannique, Française; Notices Politiques; Le Citoyen Français*, etc. In one corner of the room stood several huge bars of iron, curiously shaped, and two large trunks; opposite the fireplace, a board covered with pamphlets and journals, having more the appearance of a dresser in a scullery. Such was the wretched habitation,"

etc. (*Letters from France in 1802*, by Henry Redhead Yorke, 1804, ii. 339-340. See the passage also in *Sherwin's Life*, pp. 188-9).

Mr. Yorke states that he "never sat down in such a filthy apartment in the whole course of his life," which is perfectly credible, he being a person of means; but the reader will see that even this statement does not make out Paine to have been generally offensive in his habits. Paine was at that moment preparing to return to America, as Mr. Yorke goes on to intimate; the "bars of iron" were parts of his model iron bridge; and his trunks and papers were presumably packed for transport. The room was not Paine's living-room, and in the circumstances it will be intelligible to most people that without becoming demoralized he should let such an apartment remain unswept. Beyond this Mr. Yorke has not a word to say against the habits of his old acquaintance, though like many other Englishmen at the time he had become conservative in his opinions, and was a good deal worried by Paine's freethinking. He makes an explanation, however, which would decently account for worse carelessness than he tells of. "I was forcibly struck," he says, "with his altered appearance. Time seemed to have made dreadful ravages with his whole frame, and a settled melancholy was visible on his countenance." And this recalls a circumstance of importance which is not disclosed by Mr. Stephen's biographic notice.

Paine, it will be remembered, after being eagerly welcomed in France and made a member of the National Convention, came under the displeasure of the extreme Jacobin party by strongly opposing the execution of Louis XVI., such a step being repugnant to his essentially humane cast of mind. Like so many others, he was cast in prison at the order of Robespierre's Committee of Public Safety. The accident by which, on one occasion, he escaped execution—a mark being made on the inside instead of the outside of his cell door—is well known. But it is less well known that during his imprisonment of eleven months he not only had a violent and almost fatal fever (which again preserved him from execution) but became permanently affected with an abscess in the side, which during the remainder of his life caused him much pain. Now, if a man thus afflicted had really fallen into a habit of drinking too much, or of neglecting appearances, or of even worse slovenliness, a fair-minded critic would have felt it only just to mention the fact of his painful disease. And if, further, a man so situated laboured under Paine's grief of feeling that the great cause in which he believed had utterly wrecked itself in France, such a critic would further have recognized that a resort to strong drink on the sufferer's part was a pathetic and painful, rather than a crudely disgraceful proceeding. And if, finally, such a sufferer, on returning to his adopted country, of whose freedom he was one of the most influential founders, saw himself slumped and vilified by old associates on account of his conscientious religious opinions, the same hypothetic just-minded critic would have seen in the fact a very adequate apology for indulgence in stimulants. But Mr. Stephen, while believing in the story of Paine's intemperance, hints at none of these circumstances; and after all, as has been pointed out, the alleged indulgence did not really take place.

We have seen evidence that Paine's habits were not drunken in America even in his last darkened and lonely days. There is equally good proof that his habits were sober in Paris. Joel Barlow, the author of that defunct epic *The Columbiad*, was applied to by Cheetham for evidence as to Paine's habits in Paris, where Barlow had been one of his intimates. "He was a great drunkard here," wrote Cheetham

from New York, "and Mr. M—, a merchant of this city, who lived with him when he was arrested by order of Robespierre, tells me he was intoxicated, when that event happened" (Sherwin, Appendix, p. xxxiii.). This letter, as Mr. Vale has pointed out, with similar hearsays, misled Barlow, who had never been in Paine's neighbourhood after leaving Paris, into believing that the latter had really become latterly intemperate, and he expresses this belief in his answer. But he is explicit as to Paine's sobriety in Paris:—

I never heard before that Paine was intoxicated that night. Indeed, the officers brought him directly to my house, which was two miles from his lodgings, and about as much from the place where he had been dining. He was not intoxicated when they came to me. . . . You ask what company he kept—he always kept the best, both in England and France, till . . . he conceived himself neglected and despised by his former friends in the United States. . . . Thomas Paine, as a visiting acquaintance and as a literary friend, the only points of view in which I knew him, was one of the most instructive men I ever have known. . . . He was always charitable to the poor beyond his means. . . . (Sherwin, Appendix, pp. xxxvii.viii).

It is only in contrasting Paine with Burke that Mr. Stephen avails himself of the help of Cheetham, his earlier notices betray no tendency to show fair play to the unpopular infidel. The following is from the passage which introduces Paine in the theological section:—

Good Englishmen expressed their disgust for the irreverent infidel by calling him Tom, and the name still warns all men that its proprietor does not deserve even posthumous civility. Paine indeed is, in a sense, but the echo of Collins and Woolston; but the tone of the speaker is altered. . . . The early deists wrote for educated men. Paine is appealing to the mob. . . . His ignorance was vast, and his language brutal; but he had the gift of a true demagogue, the power of wielding a fine vigorous English, a fit vehicle for fanatical passion. His tracts may be set without too (*sic*) much disadvantage beside the attack upon Wood's half-pence, or the best pieces of Cobbett (*History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, i. 458).

It was thus presumably by way of showing he was a "good Englishman" that Mr. Stephen himself repeatedly names Paine "Tom" in his incidental allusions; and if scrupulous incivility to the dead unbeliever will suffice, he certainly ought to stand well with his orthodox countrymen. It will be noticed that where, as in the foregoing paragraph, he has occasion to accord such praise as it is impossible for a rationalist decently to withhold, Mr. Stephen is careful to so phrase it that it shall have a certain flavour of detraction. Thus Paine's fine vigorous English must needs be further labelled as a "fit vehicle for fanatical passion." Now, if fanatical passion be an offset to a man's literary power, there is no case in which more deduction must be made than in that of Burke, who in his later utterances on the French Revolution carried such passion to an extent hardly attained in any important composition of the period, and certainly not by Paine. Yet it never occurs to Mr. Stephen in criticizing Burke, for whom he has an extreme admiration, to make such a qualification concerning him. Again, if Paine be a demagogue in that he wrote like Swift in the Drapier Letters, Swift is properly to be termed a demagogue in the same connexion. But I do not recall that Mr. Stephen, in his book on Swift, ever thought it necessary to bestow on the Dean the epithet in question. On the contrary, even in admitting that the Drapier Letters con-

tained many falsehoods, Mr. Stephen puts it that the Dean "went to work with unscrupulous audacity of statement, guided by the keenest strategical instinct" (Swift, p. 154). These are small matters, but they are illustrative of Mr. Stephen's critical practice.

Paine, says Mr. Stephen, wrote for the mob. He did indeed appeal to the general population, who were habitually appealed to by the Church he wished to overthrow; but anyone not bent on casting epithets at him would see, I think, that he never appealed to "the mob" in the sense of striving to stir the passions of the unreasoning. I should say there is at least as much appeal to reason in any one of Paine's chief works as in Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution*, though the latter certainly appealed more to upper-class sentiment. And Wesley and Whitefield daily appealed to "the mob" in the true sense of the term, since they addressed those who could not read, and those on whom sheer argument would have been lost. But Mr. Stephen never uses the word in connexion with Methodism. In that regard we are told that "all warmth of sentiment had passed to the side of Wesley and Whitefield," as compared with preachers like Blair (ii. 346); Whitefield, the great mob orator of evangelicalism, is classed as an "enthusiast" (378), and his power is "dramatic rather than . . . intellectual"—but not demagogic or fanatical; and while Wesley's writing is "full of a doctrine which frequently leads to an unlovely superstition," yet "as clearly it implies a vivid sentiment, never to be despised for its ugly clothing" (ii. 432). It is only when a man's sentiment is unpopular that it is to be despised for its clothing, in Mr. Stephen's critical system.

JOHN M. ROBERTSON.

(To be continued)

Acid Drops

Some of the truth concerning the Abdication of Edward VIII. is beginning to see the light, and it bears out—so far—what we said at the time. It will be remembered that the first blow in the campaign was struck by the Bishop of Bradford. He said people were concerned about the life of Edward VIII. This was followed by our artful Archbishop and the very honest Mr. Baldwin. Now the *Daily Express* of August 26 publishes a statement from the Bishop of Bradford, that all he had in view was to express "the indignation many people felt at the indifference to religious observances which King Edward showed in public." That is all, and all the rest was a camouflage, according to one of the chief actors in the performance. If Edward had only gone to Church regularly, he might have associated with Mrs. Simpson to the end without any trouble. That is the historic manner in which our Kings have behaved, and the Church never raised a single protest. But he was indifferent to religious-observances "in public." If he had laughed at religious services in private, that would have been all right. But to show in public indifference to religious services; that was the unforgivable crime. The Churches have often excluded or damned a man for being honest, but never for being a hypocrite.

It is to be observed that the present King, ever since his Coronation, has gone regularly to Church, and his dutiful behaviour has been duly chronicled every Monday morning. He is not likely to offend the "dignified clergy" by exercising mental independence in the observance of religion. His religion is selected for him by the State, and he is keeping his part of the bargain.

The *Christian World* says that "In no country but Great Britain could radio have been so firmly harnessed to the cause of religion." The *Christian World* stands

for the freedom of religion from State patronage and control. At least, it used to stand for that, but in practice that has meant no more than struggling to get an equal share of State patronage and endowment. So we have a State-granted monopoly, firmly wedded to religion, and seeing to it on Sunday, that when the Churches are taking a part of the day in religious services, those who do not want to listen to them shall listen to nothing else. That is what the *Christian World* understands by religious equality!

If we were not so well acquainted with the peculiarities of human reasoning we might take it for granted that the present state of affairs in Spain and China would make clear the "arguments" often used that the way to prevent war is (1) for each country to be stronger than any other country, (2) to see that war is so "frightful," that no country will risk the destruction of its population by means of modern implements of destruction. The first piece of reasoning is so hopeless that argument against those who use it is almost useless. In any game of skill the foolishness of each of two competitors being able to beat the other would be easily assessed. But in military matters folly is nearly always king. As to number two, all one need say is that there is no conceivable danger that men will not face, and, second, the existence of engines of destruction that may kill thousands, where previous weapons killed hundreds, does not restrain, they rather incite. In war it is not men, women and children that are killed, it is "the enemy," and it is always a moral act to slaughter the "enemy," just as it is pure patriotism to hate him. It was a holiday for crowds when heretics were burned at the stake, and it is becoming a holiday feast for newspaper readers to read of the machine-gunning and bombing of old men, women and children as a method of forcing the enemy to surrender. Human nature can be as efficiently trained to cruelty as to kindness, and gallantry in the face of the enemy may be evidenced by bombing civilians as in killing armed opponents. It is a question of habit, and there is no need to stress the direction of habit nowadays where war is concerned.

But we do not expect what we have said will have any great effect on those who are fond of the two stupidities which we have pilloried. The Bible was right in at least one thing: "Though you pound a fool in a mortar with a pestle, yet will his folly not depart from him." And the two things about which a man may be easily and triumphantly foolish are religion and war.

General Franco thanks Mussolini for sending him the "Italian legionaries," Mussolini expresses in return his pride in what his legionaries have done, and looks forward to "our final victory." Our Government has no official knowledge of Italy helping the insurgents in Spain. But it does warn Franco that it will be seriously annoyed if he goes on attacking British merchant vessels, and with true Ironside determination it has instructed British battleships, if they find a Spanish insurgent vessel, or even an Italian submarine torpedoing a British ship immediate action is to be taken. There is life in the British bulldog yet.

In order to keep in line with the Italian and German branches of the Fascist Party, the English Branch solemnly gave warning that it would, on September 3, burn copies of the *News Chronicle*. Whether the order has come from abroad or not is unstated. But the editor of the *News-Chronicle* may thank his stars that the Fascists are not at present in power. A beating-up and concentration camp would certainly be his reward for daring to speak so disrespectfully of God's representative in Great Britain. A reporter of the *News-Chronicle* who went down to Bethnal Green to see what it was all about was told by some of the Fascists that if he dared to show his face in Bethnal Green again he would be set about with knuckle-dusters. This warning is quite an unusual piece of courtesy on the part of these gentlemen. We hope they are not losing their nerve.

The Vicar of St. Mary's Church, Edge Hill, advocates the using of the birch for boys and girls. That is what we may understand by *real* Christianity, and is the natural outcome of a religious teaching that for centuries lived upon the terror it could inspire in people by its doctrine of eternal torment. Every attempt to reform the criminal laws has always met with the opposition of the clergy, and the Rev. Eric Treacy is running in line with Christian tradition. After all, those who praise God for damning people for being as he made them, are not likely to recoil from attempting to make boys and girls better by a display of brutality.

The Vicar of St. James', Teignmouth, thinks it would be better for the town if the park were closed on Sunday, also the Sunday concerts in the Pavilion, and a late evening service conducted by all the ministers of the town. We recognize the Vicar's disinterestedness, but his modesty should not stand in the way of his advocating compulsory attendance at church, the abolition of all games, reading of "light literature," and Sunday papers *at home*. After all it is only playing with the subject to stop games in public on Sunday and prevent them in the home. The purpose the vicar has in view is clearly the getting of people into church, and it is not fair to the Church to permit home attractions that will keep people away from divine service." It is possible, by making home dull enough, to make the Church service attractive by contrast.

Some of the papers are expressing disgust at the mobbing of a film artist by thousands of women—and men. Such conduct, it is said, is un-English. They are English people who do it, but it is un-English. Presumably it is Dutch or German. Publicity is a great thing, and film companies see to it that they are well served. But suppose the gigantic advertising of the Coronation for nearly a year had been practised in the case of Taylor? When one looks back on things it does not look as though we English have much to learn from American publicity agents.

It is astonishing how clergymen delight to confuse us by talking about "belief" as if religion were the only form of or use for belief. Here is the Rev. J. C. Hardwicke, a friendly type of parson, who ought to know better. He has written a book called *No Casual Creed*, in which he says: "Love is belief," and:—

Love, we know, makes the world go round, but what is love but an extreme form of belief?

Such twaddle is as sane as pretending that to drink means (as many fanatics seem to think) drinking what they call "intoxicants." Eating does not always mean eating dynamite. Snelling need not imply sniffing "dope." We believe Mr. Hardwicke is talking nonsense.

The *Christian World* rather overdoes it by calling popular clergymen "Princes of the Pulpit." We seem to remember Christ's words about "Be ye not called Master," etc., and is there not truth in the phrase "the fatal opulence of bishops"?

That blessed word "unity," applied to the Christian Church, becomes more and more nebulous when the various sects belonging to Christianity get together for a heart-to-heart talk. And this is particularly the case when the Roman Catholic sect declines to have anything to do with those who refuse to admit its authority as derived from God Almighty. Needless to say that at the recent Conference in Edinburgh on Faith and Order, the speakers were almost, if not quite, in full agreement on the "Affirmation of Unity"; but the reason for this does not arise from "urge" of brotherhood, but from the advance of Freethinking all over the country. It is rapidly becoming a case of compulsory union or gradual dissolution. A temporary advantage may be gained by a union of the Churches, but no union of a number of outworn

beliefs and discredited doctrines can avail against the steady advance of humanity. It is this that the Churches have ultimately to conquer, or admit defeat.

But the gem of this Report is its affirmation about "the Word of God," and the way in which "God calls and fashions His chosen people and speaks His Word to His Prophets and Apostles:—

In the fullness of time the Word of God is manifested in Christ our Lord, the Incarnate Word, comprehensively in His redeeming work, that is, in His words and deeds, in His life and character, in His suffering, death, and resurrection, culminating in the gift of the Spirit, and in the life which he gives to the Church.

Only the Rev. W. H. Elliot, in his best B.B.C. voice, could do anything like justice to such hopeless nonsense. It has done duty for many centuries, but it is difficult to understand how anybody with any pretence to a modern education believes a word of this theological rigmarole, or that a belief in it is of the slightest use in our day. The impossibility of Christians uniting on fundamental doctrines soon showed itself. For example, Prof. McNeill, a Baptist from Canada, wanted to include non-Trinitarians as members of the movement for "unity," but the Trinitarians strongly objected. Prof. McNeill himself has "difficulties in identifying Jesus with God," and he was not strong on the Trinity. This led to a discussion as to whether "Jesus was a divine person begotten of His Father," the Archbishop of Dublin protesting that this seemed to be left as a matter of choice, "but there should not be that choice." On another Report, that on "Ministry and Sacraments," Dr. Headlam "was frankly disappointed," as he considered it would have little use in future years. One could safely say that of the whole Conference.

Books on Jesus are still being poured out from the press. The other day there appeared a life of "Our Lord," by the Rev. Conrad Noel, who does his best to show that what Jesus really taught was modern Communism. Now another book on the Christian deity has been published, written by Dr. Major and others. It is entitled *The Mission and Message of Jesus*—as if books dealing with the same subject cannot be numbered in their hundreds of thousands. There is one thing about this book which a critic must be forced to concede, and that is, it will make a Christian who already believes continue in his belief. But nobody outside a lunatic asylum could imagine that this kind of apologetic would convert a non-Christian.

According to the *Times Literary Supplement's* critic, Dr. Major is delighted to think that such scholars as Von Soden and Conybeare have finally disposed of the myth theory. We are afraid that Dr. Major is crowing a little too much. These scholars have not disposed of the myth theory, but no doubt the earnest Christians for whom the book has been written will believe it simply because very few of them would dream of reading Robertson, Drews, or W. B. Smith. But Dr. Major is something of a Modernist, and therefore does not swallow everything in the four Gospels—much to the disgust of an Anglo-Catholic critic who strongly objects—and in our opinion quite rightly—to watering down or even disbelieving Christ's miracles. That any man calling himself a Christian, can write of the miracle of the stilling of the tempest, that "it was no more than a wonderful story which grew out of a remarkable coincidence," and that belief in the Resurrection rests upon the impression which the personality of Jesus made upon his disciples, and needs "no Resurrection acts of an objective kind, whether historical or psychical, to prove it," proves how very accommodating the Christian must be to-day if he is to survive.

In spite of Dr. Major thus virtually giving up the central miracles of Christianity, one critic, the Dean of Winchester, pointing out that "belief in the Resurrection of Christ as an objective and historical fact is part

and parcel of the Christian Faith," says that he "has little doubt in his own mind," that Dr. Major really believes this—and that Christianity would not long survive if it was not believed. Well, of course, a man can write one thing and believe another but the fact remains that however much Dr. Major may try to bring the unconverted to Christ he won't go very far if he openly throws over miracles in any wholesale fashion. Christianity is a revealed Faith; Christ is God; and if we are to read the New Testament honestly the miracles were objective facts, not subjective impressions. On this rock stands the Religion, and diluting the message with "Modernism," or unbelief, is a sure way of exposing its inherent superstition and crudities. Perhaps Modernism is not altogether a bad thing. There has been no new revelation from God, and intelligent Christians are discarding the old one.

The Federal President of the Federated Churches of Christ in Australia (Mr. Rofe) was interviewed by the *Sunday Sun*, Sydney, and the following is a question and an answer published on June 13 last:—

Question: What hours would you prescribe as those in which all sport should be forbidden?

Mr. Rofe: Between the hours of 10.30 a.m. and 12.30 p.m., and from 6.30 p.m. to 8.30 p.m.

By an extraordinary coincidence these hours roughly synchronize with those of divine service.

The Rev. James Murray, M.A., has discovered the curious fact (a very queer fact for those who believe in a God who metes out rewards and punishments) that "festered bodies and empty stomachs" do not invariably follow man's wicked deeds. But Christian ministers are not going to let facts of that kind disturb their superstitious idea of a God of Vengeance. Mr. Murray believes that God's "Judgment" (with a capital "J") "always comes with the more awful festering of the mind, the emptying of the heart," and similar horrors less tangible, less visible and consequently less easy to deny than the earlier versions of judgment. Formerly, Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead ("at the Apostles' feet"). Nowadays, Ananias has nightmares, and Sapphira "lightheartedness," and Mr. Murray preaches.

Fifty Years Ago

CHRISTIAN ministers may give themselves airs, but the world no longer takes them at their own estimate. The real fact is, their outward assurance covers a great deal of inward cowardice. They will do anything, and preach anything, rather than relinquish the loaves and fishes; and what they call adapting Christianity to the necessities of the age, means nothing but sailing under false colours. Bit by bit the Christian flag is mended, and as the old material is worked out fresh material is worked in. But not only is the material fresh, the device is fresh; yet when the ship of religion floats under a flag in which none of the original colours remain, the officers and crew will stoutly maintain that nothing has been changed.

Much, however, as we detest hypocrisy we are gratified at the change which is taking place. Only with reasonable people will the doctrines of Christianity die by argument; with the great mass of unreasonable people they will die by gradual indifference and neglect. When Christian editors praise up humanity, and tell us that charity is the thing not faith, we understand that the creed is slowly perishing. Of course we shall be scolded for saying so, but what of that? When Mohammed lay dying, and the fatal news was whispered abroad, Omar rushed among the people with a drawn sword, declaring that he would slay anyone so impious as to assert that the prophet could die. Still Mohammed did die; and so Christianity will die, although a thousand Omars denounce the universal rumours of its approaching end.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4
Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- A. E. CARPENTER.—Letter will appear next week.
- B. COWARD.—Lecture notice was not received at this office until Wednesday. Will Branch Secretaries note that unless received by the first post on Tuesday, lecture notices cannot be inserted in that week's issue. There seems no reason why they should not be posted on Sunday, or even Saturday.
- T. B. (South Maldon).—We note your criticism, but in one case you are assuming that humanitarian agencies for the relief of suffering would not have occurred without Christianity. They are expressions of human sympathy, not of religious influence. If you note in how many cases the innocent are punished with the guilty, you will realize that your discrimination has no basis in fact.
- FOR Distributing and Circulating the *Freethinker*.—D. Fisher, 4s.
- N. WILLIAMS.—We already supply many institutions with free copies of the *Freethinker*, and are prepared to send more where possible.
- W. FOX.—Fishberg's *The Jews*, and Starbuck's *Psychology of Religion*, were both published by Walter Scott & Co., at 6s. each.
- J. BURGESS, J. LANE, E. RUSSELL, AND OTHERS.—Much obliged for cuttings. Always useful.
- A. P. BULLOCK (S.W.16).—Thanks for suggestion which is noted for further consideration.
- C. R. CORDWELL writes to inform us that an attempt is being made by some members of the West Ham Branch to form a society for the exchange of films of interest to Freethinkers. It appears to be a rather ambitious proposal in the present state of affairs; still we wish them every success.
- W. SANDFORD.—Thanks for order; paper is being sent to address given. Much appreciate your keen and practical assistance.
- J. GIBSON.—Thanks for address of a likely new reader; paper being sent for six weeks.
- The "*Freethinker*" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to this office.
- The offices of the National Secular Society and the Secular Society Limited, are now at 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Telephone: Central 1367.
- Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.
- Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London E.C.4, and not to the Editor.
- The "*Freethinker*" will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—
One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.
- All cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to "The Pioneer Press," and crossed "Midland Bank, Ltd., Clerkenwell Branch."
- Lecture notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4 by the first post on Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

Sugar Plums

We have received from the Rev. Maxwell Carson, a reply to our "Views and Opinions" of August 22. The reply is too lengthy to appear in this issue, but it will appear next week.

Judging by our letter-bag the *Freethinker* is getting into the hands of a number of new readers, a proportion of whom are sincere Christians. We are glad of this, and are sanguine enough to believe that the intelligent Christian who continues his reading will end in being

SPECIAL

THERE is a little legal trouble in Edinburgh. Mr. Whitehead lectured there during June, in the open air, and as usual literature was sold at his meetings. After some delay a summons was issued against him for the sale of literature. The summons was returnable on August 27, and as the case appeared to be of some little importance, the Society's London Solicitors instructed an Edinburgh Solicitor to appear on behalf of Mr. Whitehead. In order to ensure a proper hearing the Solicitor was instructed to enter a plea of Not Guilty. The case has now been set down for hearing on October 26. All the expenses of the case will, of course, be met by the N.S.S. Executive.

It is possible, as our use of legal terms is based upon English procedure, that their application to the Scotch Courts may be faulty in form; but the substance is there.

with us. There are some whose "conversion" is, of course, hopeless; nature intended them to be Christians, and nothing that we can do will ever prevent them realizing their fate. It is the Christian who is ready to examine our arguments and to re-examine his own case, of whom we have legitimate hopes.

We mention this accession of new readers for several reasons. First to encourage our friends in their work of introducing the *Freethinker* to strangers. That is the way in which the paper is able to make headway. Second, because the cost of production has grown of late, and the extra amount has to be met somehow. Third because a number of these new Christian readers have written me some rather interesting letters lately, which, as they would not prove of any interest to readers, since they voice points with which all Freethinkers are quite familiar, do not warrant publication. With further reading of our literature these newcomers will recognize that all their objections have been met over and over again. But they can rest assured that their letters have been read with interest and appreciation. We flatter ourselves that we know how to distinguish between the genuine enquirer who is struggling with a difficulty, and the special pleader who is concerned only with his own case and will not listen to any other.

The Branches of the N.S.S., in the North Western Area, held a first united meeting of delegates at Preston, on August 22. There were about thirty delegates present from the Branches, to discuss how the work of the area could be best done. Arrangements were made for a quarterly meeting, and officers were elected. We are very pleased to hear that the North-Western Area has followed the example of the North-Eastern Area, and we should like to see much close co-operation between the Branches in different areas than at present exists.

Bradford saints are informed that Mr. G. Whitehead, with the co-operation of local N.S.S. Branches, will hold meetings each evening for a week, commencing to-day (September 5). Pioneer Press publications and details for joining the N.S.S. may be obtained at all the meetings, and unattached Freethinkers are cordially invited to join the local movement.

In consequence of the work of the out-door meetings held in Grey Place, Greenock, every Tuesday, a desire has been expressed that a Branch of the N.S.S. be started in that town. Will those interested please write Mr. Charles Mair, 10 Mcarns Road, Greenock.

The Cremation of Unpopular Publications

THE destruction by fire of books and manuscripts running counter to received opinion is an ancient device. Civic and sacerdotal rulers alike, when they deemed their authority threatened or queried, have seldom hesitated rigorously to suppress those who ventured to dissent from the dogmas of the day.

An invaluable work in two volumes composed by the learned American librarian, Charles Ripley Gillett, has been recently published by the Columbia University Press. This history is entitled: *Burned Books*, with the subtitle, *Neglected Chapters in British History and Literature*. This study extends from the earliest recorded instances of the reduction to ashes in Britain of written or printed matter, down to the latest outrage of this character in our island.

In the time of Edward I., towards the termination of the thirteenth century, an attempt was made to destroy every memorial of Scotland's independence. The sacred stone on which the Scottish Kings were crowned was carried to London; the Public Registers were cremated; influential Scots were made captive, and the Northern Kingdom's leading library was given to the flames.

The earliest writings burnt for their religious heresies appear to have been those of Bishop Pecock, whose works were destroyed in 1457. These writings were presumably in manuscript form. Pecock assailed the Lollards, although his opinions were very similar to theirs. Gillett notes that: "In the presentation of his beliefs, he went to the then extreme length of denying that the Apostle's Creed had emanated from the Apostles; he omitted from his creed the section concerning Christ's descent into hell; and he changed the wording as to the Holy Catholic Church. For the times these tenets were startling and revolutionary." Naturally, Pecock was deposed and imprisoned, for he not only avowed heresy but actually expressed his opinions in English instead of the customary Latin. The prelate did not long endure his downfall, and his harsh treatment in captivity apparently hastened his death.

With Wolsey's approval, Luther's writings were publicly cremated at Cambridge in 1520, and in London, in 1521, while in later years many other publications were proscribed, whether printed or in manuscript. By 1546 Henry VIII. had broken from the Papacy, yet, books still forbidden and burnt included those of Tyndale, Wickliffe and Coverdale, whose translations were stigmatized as schismatic. Subsequent proclamations under Henry and his daughter Mary led to the destruction of many polemical and other compositions, few of which survive. So scarce are these writings that "their present prices are quite prohibitive to the ordinary collector. Either the vigour with which the royal orders were carried out, or the lapse of time, or both combined, account for the fewness of the survivals. Many of the titles cited by Foxe have utterly disappeared, and the known copies of others are so few as to be counted on one's fingers."

With the demise of Edward VI. and the Romanist revival under Mary, the persecution of political and religious dissentients was resumed. Among the many martyrs was William Thomas, once clerk to the Privy Council, and also tutor to the boy King Edward. Thomas visited Rome, and was by no means edified by what he saw there. He reduced his experiences to writing, and his disclosures so scandalized the bigoted Romish Queen that Thomas was dismissed from office. Then he was tried for treason,

found guilty and put to death, while his book was burned.

John Knox and other disturbers who fled the country to escape the Marian persecution had a poor opinion of regal divinity. Knox and his companions entertained democratic and even republican sentiments. These views were plainly stated in publications which the authorities condemned to the flames. Knox, above all, was unsparing in his denunciation of unjust rulers, and he unreservedly declared that the subject is superior to the Crown, and should possess the right to dethrone kings who misconduct themselves.

In the succeeding reign of Elizabeth, George Buchanan, Prince James of Scotland's tutor, proved distinctly radical in his utterances. An able and experienced man in his capacity as preceptor to the Prince, he inculcated principles which his pupil, afterwards James I. of England, seldom regarded. Buchanan's essay *De jure regni* was dedicated to his pupil, to whom he trusted that "it might be a standing witness of my affection, and admonish you of your duty towards your subjects."

Remarkably enough, Buchanan actually justified tyrannicide in special circumstances, while his work is said to have passed through three editions in three years. The book was suppressed in 1584, but it was republished during the clash between Charles I. and the Parliament and its contentions were urged in condonation of the execution of the Stuart King.

Another startling production appeared in 1579, in French and Latin. It was soon suppressed, but this work, the *Vindicee* of Hubert Languet, was later rendered into English in 1648 as *A Defence of Liberty against Tyrants*. Its translator is supposed to have been William Walker, the executioner of Charles I., in Whitehall. Gillett thinks that "It was probably part of the anti-royalist propaganda, and it probably had an influence upon the civil and popular attitude towards the King. Condemned and publicly burnt at the Restoration, it nevertheless reappeared in 1689 after the Revolution, despite its declaration that: 'If the Prince fail in his promise, the People are exempt from their obedience. It is therefore permitted to the officers of a kingdom . . . to suppress a tyrant.'"

Elizabeth and her ministers strove to establish a Church sufficiently comprehensive to embrace all law-abiding Protestant believers. But there was so much sectarian venom and spite, as well as a pronounced spirit of individualism which the theory of the right of private judgment inevitably encouraged, that this laudable endeavour proved ineffectual. Moreover, the State was unable to repress the teachings of dissentient minorities. Productions from concealed presses bearing no printers' names were in constant circulation, while men like Cartwright, Field and Wilson were early Puritans, who openly advocated a national Church organized on Presbyterian principles.

Henry Nicholas was the pastor of a sect known as the *Family of Love*, and if we credit the accusations of its critics, it anticipated several more recent erotic communions. Scandalous accounts of the conduct of Nicholas and his adherents were current, and the sect was bitterly assailed by reputable writers. Still, it is reasonable to conclude that these aspersions were overdrawn. In any case, the sect was detested by the clergy, and it was stigmatized as an illiterate congregation shamefully deluded by its ministers who expounded "damnable heresies, directly contrary to divers of the principal Articles of our belief and Christian faith." Nicholas' writings were sentenced to incineration in 1580 yet, despite persecution, the

Family survived until the time of James I., when a petition craving its toleration was presented to the Stuart ruler.

Several doctrines of this strange sect seem childish and absurd, but scarcely more so than many cherished to-day by quite respectable religious denominations. As Gillett remarks: "Only a careful study of the many minor sects so rife in English history, would reveal how numerous and varied were the distorted notions which were propounded. Some of the views which the Family held were quite innocuous, others wholly silly, some were full of presumption, while still others were so permeated with unorthodox expressions as to have aroused the indignation and opposition of the dignitaries of the Church, and to have caused them to forget all bounds of decorous and polite speech, and to lapse into a literary Billingsgate which served to express their detestation, but which does not serve to raise the writers at all in the esteem of the modern reader."

The pseudonymous Martin Marprelate tracts were widely known and much displeased the authorities. In 1588 appeared a Proclamation ordering all in possession of schismatical, seditious and defamatory writings to surrender them for destruction. These effusions began to appear toward the close of the sixteenth century, and were printed by a secret press. The identity of the author or authors was successfully concealed and even now, after careful investigation, this is still undiscovered. Obviously the tract writers possessed considerable inside information concerning weaknesses of the clergy, which were exposed to public scorn and ridicule. Constant search was made for the pestilent private press which was, perhaps, discovered. In any case, the pamphlets ceased to appear. Still, in the coming years Marprelate had many imitators who successfully defied and outwitted the authorities.

The Martinist tracts have been decried as vulgar scurrility. Yet they compare very favourably in tone and temper with the diatribes of their enemies. When torn from their context Martin's expressions appear more outrageous than when read in their original setting. But epithets such as those flung at the prelates were certainly disconcerting. It was complained that they had been denounced as Incarnate Devils, Clogging, Cozening Knaves and Proud Popish, Presumptuous, Prophane, Paltry, Pestilent, Pernicious Prelates. Nor did the lesser clergy escape the lash of the Marprelate's whip. Among many choice designations they were likened unto Hogs, Dogs, Wolves, Foxes and a Cursed, Uncircumcised, Murdering Generation. Also, they were called a Crew of Bloody Soul Murderers and Sacrilegious Church Robbers; while when gathered in Convocation the Bishops and clergy are described as "An Anti-Christian Swinish Rabble . . . the Convocation House of Devils, and Beelzebub of Canterbury, the Chief of these Devils."

After the Marprelate pamphlets had abruptly ended publication a dialogue appeared from another hand, but composed on similar lines. This tract bore no date or publisher's address: it was anonymous and a product of a hidden press. In the dialogue the evils of ecclesiasticism were laid bare to the light of day. The Lords Spiritual are dismissed as the Bishops of the Devil, one of whom was charged with bigamy. According to Farrer this tract was cremated by command of the Episcopacy. Considerable conjecture concerning its authorship has been aroused, but without positive identification.

John Udall, who died in 1592, and John Penny, who was executed in 1593, were both accused of its authorship, and a little before these dates the Marpre-

late prints came to an end. Probably, Gillett best interprets the ascertained facts in concluding that while both Udall and Penny were parties to their publication, this by no means implies "that they were the authors. Their deaths and the cessation of the publications were nearly coincident, but other circumstances, such as the discovery of the secret press, are sufficient to account for the facts."

T. F. PALMER.

Answers to Freethinkers

I.

ONE of the many stock charges against the Christian religion urged by Freethinkers is its persecution mania. From its earliest days Christianity employed this weapon as a means of silencing heretics. It may be said that the first Christians were only following or copying the Jews who, when in power, also employed the same weapon, and that Jesus, or whoever wrote in his name, preferred to "love" his enemy. As a matter of fact, Jesus himself, if the Gospels are trustworthy records, used pretty violent language against those who differed from him, and consigned to Hell those who persisted in their heresy or unbelief. He even used force—such as chasing the money-changers out of the Temple—when he felt it was necessary. Jesus, as the Apostle of Love and Mercy, is a mere figment of the imagination—if the Gospels are true; and though passages can be found where the Christian deity is all for love, his own actions belie his words.

The Christian Church, however, as soon as it achieved real power—as during the Dark Ages—silenced all opposition by the simple expedient of annihilating its adversaries wherever possible. Individual heretics were either imprisoned or murdered; while whole communities like the Albigenses were slaughtered out of existence. The Inquisition did its deadly work with the full support of the Church; and its record forms one of the blackest pages in human history. And even when the power over life was eventually taken out of its hands, the Christian Church saw that the heretic paid dearly for his unbelief. It is due to Freethinkers like Carlyle, Bradlaugh and others, who resisted the Church and its infamous persecution teaching, that the life of the heretic these days is free from at least petty tyrannies.

All this is merely "old stuff." We Freethinkers have enlarged upon it, with copious details, times without number; and it has indeed proved one of our most effective weapons. But I have often wondered what *real* reply to our charges could be made by Christians. To us it seemed that no Church could stand up against our attack, that it was impossible for even a believer, directly he heard of the "crimes of Christianity," to do anything else but bow his head in shame. I have no doubt that we made many converts by pressing home our indictment; but I have to confess that large numbers of believers remain absolutely unmoved. It may be true that abominable crimes have been committed by the church, or by priests, or by Christian courts. It may be true that a large number of Christian Kings and Popes were blackguards. But what about it? How can a bad King affect the truth of Christianity—which is a divine religion? Why should the Christian Church, as a Church, be held responsible for the actions of various men and women, no matter what high posts they held, or for unrighteous zeal, or for individual acts of barbarism?

Whatever we may say of the Roman Church, it would be foolish to deny that it has had some first-class brains as its champions. Bossuet, Newman, and Wiseman are not negligible people by any means. They cannot be lightly dismissed, however passionately we are convinced that they are wrong. Newman actually became a convert to "Popery," despite the hatred in his day evinced almost everywhere in England for Roman Catholicism. And Newman in particular insisted that his conversion was due at least as much to reason as to faith—probably more so.

The way the Church answers our charges is very intriguing—if I may use this word. In the first place, a list of all those Christians who were against persecution is carefully prepared. Suppose then, for example, the question is asked as to whether the Roman Church believes in mass conversion by force—that is, either accept Christianity or be prepared to die? The answer is that the Church cannot be held in any way responsible for "the actions of Catholic sovereigns, who from motives of policy, avarice, or mistaken zeal used force in bringing about conversions." Alcuin severely rebuked Charlemagne for forcing pagan Saxons to accept Christianity. Pope Innocent XI. attacked Louis XIV. "for his cruel dragonnades"; and "Sixtus IV. continually denounced the arbitrary cruelty and injustice of the Spanish Inquisition." Some of the Church Fathers were undoubtedly opposed to mass conversions and said so. To give one example, Lactantius wrote: "There is no justification for violence and injury, for religion cannot be imposed by force."

Now all this is quite true; and the Catholic apologist sits back complacently, and calmly contends that because here and there, a Pope or a church writer denounced mass conversion by force, the Church must not be blamed for "the actions of Catholic sovereigns," whose zeal outran their humanity. But why not? These people *were* Catholics; they had the power and the force, and they used these weapons without mercy. Death or conversion was their cry. Their Catholic upbringing was due entirely to the Church—indeed, they were allowed to imbibe nothing but what the Church of Rome allowed. They were, in all probability, not permitted to read the very Fathers who pleaded—when they did so plead—for justice and mercy. What these Catholic Kings and rulers did was the direct outcome of Catholic teaching, and it is rank hypocrisy to pretend now—when humanism is becoming a leading motive—that the Church of Rome was "in no way responsible" for the crimes of its powerful adherents.

Look at the way in which once again the Catholic sits back benevolently smiling when he is asked about the crimes committed against humanity by the Inquisition. Is the Church to blame here? Oh dear, no. In the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, writing on this vile institution (I think I am right in saying it is not completely abolished yet—only suspended), Blotzer says:—

It is essential to note that the Inquisition, in its establishment and procedure pertains not to the sphere of belief, but to that of discipline. The dogmatic teaching of the Church is in no way affected by the question whether the Inquisition was justified in its scope, wise in its methods, or extreme in its practice.

Perhaps not—but what then? Blotzer adroitly turns away from the question one puts when dealing with the Inquisition. Did not the Church use this instrument of iniquity to wipe out heresy, unbelief and opposition? My dear sir, answers the priest with a smile, the dogmas of the Church really have nothing

to do with the excesses—ahem—unfortunately committed by the Inquisition. And the Catholic believes he can get away with this answer—a belief, of course, justified, because it silences any rising doubt in his own flock.

Naturally, if the Church is pressed further, it can fall back upon another answer. The Rev. B. L. Conway, in *The Question Box*, says: "A fair-minded man ought not to view the twelfth or the thirteenth century from the standpoint of the twentieth." Quite right, no fair-minded person does. But it is the boast of the Church that it is Divine, that it is the same Church now that Christ gave to his Apostles, that it has not changed and never will change, the same yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow. So the Church in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (and incidentally in the fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth) was exactly what it is to-day. Yet it countenanced some of the vilest crimes ever committed against humanity. What is the excuse for the treatment meted out to La Barre in the eighteenth century by the French Church—a crime which roused Voltaire to the highest indignation?

Of course we know that torture, imprisonment, mutilation, burning, hanging and quartering were all looked upon in the Middle Ages as the ordinary way to treat malefactors or heretics. It took centuries to inculcate simple humanism. Even the Golden Age of Victoria the Good, that is, the early nineteenth century, was disfigured by punishment for petty crimes which leaves one aghast at "man's inhumanity to man." Some of these punishments are almost unbelievable in their ferocity. The truth is that the Church never was better than the age in which it flourished.

How meek and mild the Church of Rome is these days can be seen by this extract from Dr. Keating's *Does the Church Persecute?* :—

Were the Church in absolute power to-day, she would seek to repress by force none of the liberties which have grown with the growth of the civilization she inspired, and are dear to this age. There is nothing in her spirit to show that she would go beyond the well-ordered civil State in checking such license as would dissolve society. She is a voluntary association; her members are won to her by the evidence of truth and the power of grace, and they are held by the same means.

Butter would hardly melt in the mouths of our modern priests, so kind and gentle are they. But it is hoped no Freethinker will ever be taken in by this kind of slush. In a "well-ordered civil State," where freedom of thought must be allowed, criticism of existing institutions necessarily follows. Does anybody believe that, were the Church of Rome in power, the *Freethinker* would be allowed to carry on its destructive criticism? That it would be permitted to expose the childish superstitions of the Catholic Church? The answer is obvious.

H. CUTNER.

HARD TO BEAT

For sheer stupidity and insolence, the remark of a judge at a London County Court case, takes a good deal of beating. "Why can't your wife cut your hair?" was the idiotic question he asked an unemployed man.

I suppose it was his humorous way of showing the man how he could economize in saving the nothing he had.

I imagine that the real reason why the man did not get his wife to cut his hair was the same as it would have been had he been employed—because he did not want to be made to look ridiculous.

Catholicism and Divorce

A CASE has just been heard here in Sydney (N.S.W.), that illustrates in a very simple, practical manner the barbaric attitude of the Catholic Church regarding divorce.

The parties were Dr. Thomas N. Bolger, born of Catholic parents, and his wife, who appears to have become a Catholic with her marriage. Mrs. Bolger sought a divorce on the grounds of cruelty. Let us see, then, what she would have had to endure if, consistently with the Catholic faith, she had refrained from seeking relief in this way; or if the State-imposed laws did not permit what Catholicism refuses to grant.

Quotation marks in what follows indicate passages just as they have been taken from the press reports of the proceedings.

Mrs. Bolger is described as a woman of intellectual attainments. "She topped the intermediate in the State in the year in which she stood for the big examination"; qualified as a professional masseuse; and took "a secretarial course in a Sydney business college." She is under 30. A son was born of the marriage, which took place about three years ago.

"The doctor's practice," said Mrs. Bolger, "was very large, and I was kept thoroughly busy looking after his clerical work—his correspondence and his accounts. The doctor consumed a considerable quantity of whisky every night. I said it wasn't fair. He replied that I was his wife; that he would do as he liked; and that he would brook no opposition."

Further, he told her to go to hell, and hit her on the shoulder.

"Came the day of the Show in 1935. The doctor told her to get up. Refusing, he commanded her to do so, and gave her a terrific blow on the lower part of the back. She cried out, 'You'll hurt me, Tom.' He said, 'Yes; I want to.' He hit her again. She got out of bed, and took a candlestick off the dressing-table, saying, 'If you hit me like that again, I'll have to hit you hard.' He jumped out of bed; seized her and sat her on a chair; held her by the left hand, put her across his knee, and gave her a belting. She cried. Finally, he let her go, and she fell on the floor. At that time she knew she was going to become a mother."

Later she went into the Lewisham Hospital for her confinement.

"Even some time before the birth of the child he wanted her to do some massage work. She pleaded that she was unable. But he insisted; and she did it—being on the matter till a week before the child was born. When she came out of the hospital—four days after returning home—she started to work about the place again. The doctor had her working every night. Once she pleaded she ought to go to bed—that she was exhausted; but he told her to go to — hell out of it.

"Next day she was prostrate; but her husband, when she was about to have lunch by herself, came to her and told her to get out of the room, and threatened to give her the devil of a hiding.

"He went into the bathroom, and came back with a razor-strop. He caught her by the shoulder, and hit her again and again with it. She pleaded with him to stop. There were terrible weals on the lower part of her back and the buttocks. The doctor had hit her at least twelve times."

Early the following December she told him that if he hit her again she would have to leave him.

"Thereupon he started to punch her all over the body and about the head. She was bruised on both arms and thighs, and had terrific bruises over the left breast. He also gave her a terrific blow between the eyes. He said that only he believed in the Hereafter he would end her life. He got the revolver; but she pacified him, and said that she was not going to leave him."

Once—at midnight, after one of these punchings—Mrs. Bolger went to another room, and after a while fell asleep.

"She was suddenly awakened with a terrific battering on the door, which was burst open by her husband, who shouted 'Where's that key?' He made straight at her to punch her. He used his closed fist. He seemed to go

mad. She sang out. 'Tom, Tom—what is wrong?' Then he pulled her out through the door, and along the passage into the double bedroom. He started to punch her again and again about the body. She was almost petrified. He seemed to have gone quite mad. She started to protest her love to him to pacify him. She said, 'For God's sake, stop it! Take control of yourself.'

"Just then the 'phone rang.

"She lay exhausted on the bed. Then he returned, and straightway commenced to attack her again and again. She remembered falling on to the floor. He was still punching her. She covered her face with her hands to protect herself, and received the blows on the back of her hands. She kept appealing to him to stop.

"Then he dealt her a terrific blow on the side of the head.

"The thought of the baby came into her mind—that is, what would happen to the child if anything happened to her. She sprang to her feet, and ran downstairs, dressed only in her night-dress, with no slippers on. Then she ran like that through the Waverley streets as far as the Bellevue Hill School, where she met a man in a motor-car, who took her to her mother's home in Rose Bay."

Sufficient is this of Mrs. Bolger's evidence as to her treatment, without following her story any further. It is a well-established truth, the world over, that doctors are very reluctant to give evidence against a fellow-practitioner. In this instance three doctors appeared in support of the injuries to which Mrs. Bolger had testified.

"Dr. Norman D. Boyle said that in March last year, during a visit by Mrs. Bolger, he had examined her, and found that she was suffering from what appeared to be a torn ligament and inflammation of the tendon sheath. 'These injuries would be consistent with violence having been used,' he said, adding that he strapped the wrist, and then gave her diathermic treatment.

"Dr. H. Sweetapple said that Mrs. Bolger consulted him in February last year, when he saw her her left eye was black, and that she had, so far as he could remember, a large bruise on the left thigh as well as other bruises about which he could not say very much. 'She was very upset and suffering from neurasthenia,' added the doctor; 'and I advised her to stay in bed.'"

Evidence of a similar character was given by Dr. Victor Trikojus—a brother, by the way, of Mrs. Bolger.

The hearing of the case occupied a fortnight. A general denial of the charges was given by Dr. Bolger. In deciding in favour of Mrs. Bolger—granting her a decree nisi, returnable in six months—Justice Boyce declared that the evidence did not support the allegation as to the doctor's excessive drinking.

Are we to take it from this, then, that the treatment of which Mrs. Bolger complained—and because of which she was given a divorce—was even devoid of the excuse of having been inflicted under the influence of liquor?

Let it here be said that as individuals or entities Dr. and Mrs. Bolger represent nothing in the purpose of this article. Interest in them begins and ends with the fact that they are Catholics. Beyond this they cease to be anything more than mere abstractions.

The important point is the exposure they provide of the ruling regarding divorce by the church to which they belong.

Strict adherence to the faith they profess would have kept them together till death itself separated them. Outside the church had Mrs. Bolger to go to get the relief to which the court considered her to be entitled. She would, in short, have had to go on for ever suffering, except for the right of divorce, established in opposition to the church, and exercised in defiance of that authority.

Catholicism still refuses to move from the benighted stand that it has so long assumed with regard to divorce.

Fortunately, the State has advanced to the extent of giving what is denied by the Catholic Church.

And a more damning indictment of the injustice of Catholicism in this respect could not possibly be formulated than in the disclosures with regard to the Bolgers.

J. Y. ANDERONEY.

Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.

Correspondence

BERTRAND RUSSELL AND ATHEISM

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—Returning from a holiday, I find I was recently reprimanded by our excellent contributor, C. S. Fraser, for calling Russell an Atheist. Russell says, "I sometimes call myself an Atheist," and when I sometimes call him such I have in mind, not only the whole nature of his philosophy, constructed exclusively of the god-hypothesis, but also such quotations as, "The whole conception of God is derived from the ancient oriental despotisms. It is a conception quite unworthy of free men." (B. Russell, *Why I am not a Christian*).

May I, therefore, suggest that Mr. Fraser's rejoinder to G.K.C. was faulty? Mr. Fraser had two courses open: either (1) to show Russell was not an Atheist, or (2) to deny that Russell aims at defeating Materialism. He chose the former, thus to concede to *Radio Times* readers that a brilliant thinker like Russell has demolished Materialism. He could more profitably have taken the course of showing that Russell does not defeat Materialism, but re-states it, as I showed in the *Freethinker* for January, 1930. E.g., "Every scientist with even a tincture of philosophy was ready to admit that the hard little lumps were no more than a technical device. In that sense Materialism is dead, but in another and more important sense it is more alive than ever it was." (B. Russell, *The Scientific Outlook*).

This would have fastened the discussion on Russell's view of Materialism, which was the point at issue, instead of which Mr. Fraser was making his opponents a present of Bertrand Russell.

And now perhaps readers will judge whether it is Mr. Fraser or myself who is making concessions to the opponent.

Mr. Fraser also refers to Materialism as the Atheists' "own philosophy," which is quite wrong, as there are many Atheists who are not Materialists, e.g., E. D. Fawcett, Joad, B. Croce and the late Prof McTaggart.

G. H. TAYLOR.

A CORRECTION

SIR,—Might I point out an error in your otherwise splendid preface to the new edition of the *Age of Reason*. You give credit to T. Paine for being the first to suggest arbitration in International disputes.

Paine himself gives that credit to King Henry II. of France. See *Rights of Man*. A man of benevolent heart, to use his own phrase!

As the *Age of Reason* is likely to be read by thousands to one who will read the *Rights of Man*, I think you should correct this error.

JAMES MCKENNA.

SHELLEY AND MOORE

SIR,—In the *Sunday Times* of August 22, there is a review of a life of Tom Moore, by Mr. L. A. Strong, entitled *The Minstrel Boy*. The critique, by Mr. Edward Shanks, contains the following excerpt: "Shelley showed himself pathetically anxious for his (Moore's) good opinion, asking Byron to do his best to mitigate Moore's disapproval of his Atheism, and pledging himself to write to Moore and put his case in a better light."

I cannot find confirmation of this statement in Shelley's letters to Byron, but in one to Horace Smith, from Pisa, dated April 11, 1822, there is the following: "Moore, after giving Lord B. much good advice about public opinion, etc., seems to deprecate my influence on his mind, on the subject of religion, and to attribute the tone assumed in *Cain* to my suggestions. Moore cautions him against my influence on this particular; with the most friendly zeal; and it is plain that his motive springs from a desire of benefiting Lord B., without degrading me. I think you know Moore. Pray assure him that I have not the smallest influence over Lord Byron, in this particular, and if I had, I certainly should employ it to

eradicate from his great mind the delusions of Christianity. I differ from Moore in thinking Christianity useful to the world; no man of sense thinks it true."

This rather long quotation indicates very clearly that Shelley was quite uncompromising in his Atheism, though his admiration for the character and genius of Moore made him rather wish that the Minstrel Boy should not have a bad opinion of him.

EDGAR SYERS.

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COUNTRY

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BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place): 7.0, Sunday, Debate—"Is Spiritualism True?" *Affir.*: Mr. Morley (Junior). *Neg.*: Mr. J. Clayton. Market, 7.30, Monday, Mr. J. V. Shortt. A Lecture. Literature for sale.

BOLTON (Steps): 8.0, Thursday, Mr. J. V. Shortt.

CHESTER-LE-STREET BRANCH N.S.S.: 7.45, Friday, Mr. H. Dalkin—"Christianity and Persecution."

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GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Mound, Edinburgh): 7.30, Sunday, Grey Place, Greenock, 8.0, Tuesday, Albert Road, Crosshill, 8.0, Wednesday, Vulcan Street, Springburn, 8.0, Thursday, Albion Street, Glasgow, 8.0, Friday, Whitefield will speak at each of these meetings.

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