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

Views and Opinions

A Christian Myth

It is not easy to kill a superstition. It is a simple task to drive it below the level of unashamed and clear expression; that occurs in myriads of cases. But to kill a superstition, so to eradicate it from our mental and emotional life that it becomes as completely foreign to our mind as is Greek to a two-year-old English baby, is quite another thing. No longer robust enough to stand the impact of enlightened knowledge, or courageous enough to face informed criticism, an intellectually discredited superstition lingers on in a region of intellectual half-lights which makes exact definition impossible.

In the war between modern Freethought and Christianity there are two glaring examples of this persistence of the primitive. One is that of the ethical Jesus. The case for the incarnate God is, nowadays, simply untenable. The genesis of the idea is well-known; its history is well-understood; and we question whether there are half-a-dozen clergymen with valid claims to scholarship and intelligence who accept in a straightforward sense the myth of a god-incarnate. One might as well expect them to believe that walnut-shells are the favourite residence of fairies. But the straightforward belief in Christ as an incarnate God having become impossible, straightway the myth of a Jesus who is the world's supreme ethical teacher takes its place. It is too much for those who suffer from an enforced enlightenment to break clearly and decisively with a long-cherished superstition. The liberation must be gradual; it must come neither as a shock to themselves nor to their less-enlightened neighbours. And then it may happen that, by the time the heresy has become completely tolerable, it has taken its place with the accepted orthodoxies.

So it is that a great many of those who outgrow the only Jesus Christ that is of a religious value fall back upon an ethical Jesus that is as fantastic as is the one whose only claim to attention is that he actually

stands for one of the world's oldest superstitions. They cry, "If we can't have Christ as a God who came down from heaven and assumed the form of a man to save us all from hell-fire, let us have a Jesus who is the world's greatest ethical teacher. Let us, for pity's sake, salvage something from the wreck! We know that, among the earliest body of Christians, it was not the moral guide but the supernatural saviour who was of consequence. We know that with every historic Christian Church, from first to last, it was the crucified saviour that formed the basis of its creed; but let us pretend that things were otherwise. That packet of pre-war German marks we know is, as money, quite worthless, but let's pretend that the bundle stands for real money. It will keep alive the delusion that we are wealthy, and perhaps, more important still, it may persuade some of our wealthy neighbours that we are on the same level as themselves."

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Distorted History

Next to the myth of the ethical Jesus is the superstition of the primitive Christians as a body of people being inspired by love for mankind, and winning the world by their humility. This is a derivative of the superstition above-noted, or even a continuation of it. For if Jesus conquered his disciples by the strength of his ethical teaching, then they in turn may well have conquered the world by their humility and moral grandeur. Granted that if Jesus actually astounded the Jews by reciting what to them could only have been a series of commonplaces, and if the outside world was completely overcome by hearing from Judea teachings with which it was quite familiar, then, we agree that Jesus might have been accepted by them as an incomparable teacher of morals. If pigs could fly then they might be used as aerial messengers in times of war. There is much virtue in an "if."

But we were a little surprised to find this particular superstition being set forth by Mr. Laurence Housman, who is, we understand, not a Christian, in a recent issue of the *Sunday Chronicle*. He says:—

Christianity was a fine religion for the first three centuries of its existence.

During those years the doctrine of non-violence sustained the early Christians and made them powerful.

Since the Church has become great in the State, however, it seems to have gone back to the days of cruelty and vengeance, and the law of retaliation has again become the general belief.

Here is the myth, set forth, not as a mere hypothesis, but as a statement of historic fact. What evidence has anyone to offer on its behalf? I know of none. Exactly when Christians, as a distinct religious body, first existed, is, as most students know,



a matter of dispute. What exactly was the "true" Christian gospel is a matter of still greater dispute. But of one thing there can be no doubt whatever, and that is that from the earliest authentic date that can be given for the appearance of Christianity on the scene, Christians appear, not as a body of people bent upon "ethical culture," nor as a people filled with a spirit of humility and practising non-resistance, but as a sect riven with dissensions, hating each other with a hatred that has perpetuated itself through the ages, and using brute force against their opponents whenever and wherever circumstances made it possible. The first authentic glimpse that we have of Christians in the Roman Empire is of a noisy, troublesome, superstitious body of people, counting rightness in doctrine as above everything else, quarrelling over details of belief, and with a ferocity that caused the better educated Romans and Greeks to look at them with surprise and contempt. Lecky, who usually tries to say everything in favour of Christianity that can be said, and a great deal which ought not to be said, says emphatically that the main cause of the hostility of the Roman Government towards the early Christian Church was their intense intolerance. There is substantial agreement amongst even Christian ecclesiastical historians on this point. One would like Mr. Housman to set forth in plain and dated statements the precise period in which Christians may be found exhibiting a general practice of non-violence, and to point out in what manner, assuming such an agreed teaching existed, this contributed to Christianity becoming a State religion.

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#### Some Plain Facts

I think if Mr. Housman sets himself this task he will discover two or three substantial and illuminating truths. The first is that Christianity appears in the Roman Empire as one amongst a number of competing Eastern religious cults. (He will find such a work as Mr. F. Legge's *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity* very useful in providing a summary of some of the salient facts on this aspect of Christian origins). Second, he will find that in this welter of superstitions the Christian Church came to power, not as a consequence of its impressive moral teachings, and *practice* of non-resistance, but as a result of political statecraft, which saw in the Christian Church an instrument for strengthening political and imperial power. It was not its alliance with the State that corrupted Christianity; it was the State that saved Christianity from extinction. But for the State, it is possible, as many historians have noted, that some other cult (Mithraism, for example) might have taken a dominating position, and Christianity would have trodden the road taken by other contemporary religious cults, some of which actually embodied many of the symbols, doctrines and ethical teachings of Christianity.

Finally, Mr. Housman would discover that it was not the State that corrupted the Church; it was the Church that corrupted (worsened) the State. The accepted principle of the Pagan Roman State in matters of religion was toleration. Renan pointed out that there did not exist in Rome any law against the free expression of opinion; and, at a later period, when the well-established Christian Church wished to create a legal instrument for the criminal prosecution of heretical opinions, as so great an authority as Lea shows, there was nothing in Roman Law for the purpose. The result was the creation of the Inquisition, the only original contribution of Christianity to Europe, and one of the most diabolical creations that can be placed to the credit of any organization or institution. In not a single State in Europe, or in the

world, has the Church ever exercised an influence in the creation of better criminal law. It sanctified and perpetuated, as part of the criminal law, the use of torture. It destroyed the position of women as it existed in the later Roman Empire. It naturalized persecution for opinion throughout the whole of Europe. It made itself the greatest of European landholders, and not only did it exact its rights with all the severity of the hardest of feudal landowners, but it took away from individual Churches and monasteries the right to mitigate the severity of ownership on the ground that property donated to, or owned by, the Church was "sacred," and could be neither sold nor the claims of the Church abated. In such mass action as we have in the cases of the massacre of the Huguenots in France, and the expulsion of Moors and Jews from Spain, there was evident the influence of the Church, with the secular State doing what it could to delay the action.

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#### A Warning

We may assume that Mr. Housman does not believe in miracles; but to ask us to believe that the primitive Church was so filled with the spirit of humility as to overcome the powerful Roman Empire, and that from the moment the Church conquered it was dominated by greed, arrogance and the lust for persecution, and to such an extent that it perpetuated these qualities in the whole of its subsequent history, to expect us to accept this is to ask for belief in a perpetual miracle. Can Mr. Housman, or anyone else, give us a latitude and longitude, a date and a place for these manifestations of humility or humanitarian impulses which he believes marked the early Christian Church? The first three centuries is too vague. Taking orthodox chronology for granted, the Church during that time had no power to coerce forcibly the people of the Roman Empire. But even in orthodox history as presented by such writers as Mosheim, Greisenger, Milman, and others the intolerance, the ferocity of Christians to each other, are unmistakable. When and where are we to look for this body of Christians who were, as a whole, marked with that lofty humanitarianism and humility which is such a favourite picture with sentimental Freethinkers and opportunist Christians?

I am not asking for individual instances. It is nothing new at any period of history to find individuals better than their professed creed. It is in this way that improvement comes. What I am asking for is the place and the time at which the *Christian Church* was vitally concerned with morality as a foundational stone of its teaching. What Mr. Housman asks us to believe is that the Church got worse as it got older. The fact is that the Church has got better as it has advanced in years. It is to-day more tolerant than it ever was, it is more humane than it ever was, it is more "reasonable" than it ever was. The only direction in which the Church has worsened is that it has fewer men of first-rate intelligence in its service than it ever had. And it has become (humanly) better because it no more dares to preach its ancient doctrines in their stark barbarity than it dares practice cannibalism. It was forced to become better in order to exist. But it is surely time that non-Christians ceased to accept this legend of the high ethical quality of the early Christian Church, and its rapid and perpetual corruption through its association with the State. This desire of unbelievers to find something good at the core of Christianity is very pathetic. Or is it the tribute that timidity—consciously or unconsciously—pays to power?



## The Punchinellos of Piety

"I do not like your great men who beckon me to them, call me their dear child; and if I happen to say 'I beg leave sir, to dissent a little from you,' stamp and cry, 'The devil you do!' and whistle to the executioner."—*Landor*.

THE Archbishop of Canterbury has not yet succeeded in recalling the English people to religion. In conjunction, however, with the Bishops of his own particular Church, which happens to be the State form of religion in this country, he has succeeded in making the Anglican hierarchy "a motley to the view." The Established Religion, indeed, had latterly fallen in public estimation. The public exposure of the ancient Tithe Racket; the Church's participation in the tax on miners' labour; the sweating of ecclesiastical employees, in churches and schools; all combined to undermine the reputation which Priestcraft had so long enjoyed among the credulous.

As the Anglican Church has declined in popularity and influence, the Archbishop has sought to reassert this Church's power and prerogative. To this end he has run wild in politics, hoping to create a diversion and evade further criticism. Indeed, there must have been widespread astonishment among his faithful followers at his share in the abdication of the ex-King, and still more astonishment at his public appearance at the protest meeting against the Japanese bombings. For the Archbishop, three months earlier, had caned the Dean of his own Cathedral of Canterbury for doing the same thing. The Dean had publicly denounced bombings in Spain. The Archbishop, sitting on the fence, disclaimed all responsibility for the Dean's outburst, and regretted that he had "brought into the arena of acute political controversy the name of the Cathedral Church of Canterbury."

Now, what is the precise difference between the bombing of a Spanish town and the bombing of a Chinese city? And what is the difference between the actions of the Dean and those of the Archbishop, except that one is Head of his Church, and the other a lesser member of the same firm?

The Archbishop, at the Albert Hall, protested that he was seeking to "uphold the honour of humanity." Yet a little time before he had sternly rebuked the unfortunate Dean for sticking his sacred nose into affairs which did not concern him.

The ordinary man will be surprised at His Grace's belated zeal for humanity. Why should the Archbishop reserve his tears for the Chinese, and be frozen-eyed in the case of Spaniards? And why should the Archbishop forget altogether that English people are also human beings? His Church has sweated curates, vergers, organists, school-teachers, charwomen, and choristers for years and years, and His Grace never raised a finger. His Church derived vast revenues from royalties on miners' labour, unjust taxes on agriculture, and from slum property, but His Grace never turned a hair. What was it that made the Archbishop, in a single night, forsake his attitude of supine inattention to human suffering?

A leading and influential London newspaper had organized a great protest meeting, which promised to be a gigantic success. The Archbishop leapt the fence, and forgot all his stoical indifference. The one principle to which his loyalty never falters is to be on the side of the biggest crowd. Indeed, a well-advertised suggestion that the Archbishop was not averse from the idea of upholding the honour of humanity might be very useful propaganda. Especially in view of the further hint that some day the red flag might fly at Westminster.

Bishops, and even Archbishops, are supposed to be inspired by the "Holy Spirit." Presumably, curates have a modest inoculation of the same divine gift. But the line is definitely drawn at curates. Churchwardens and other officials are mere men of the world, and do not belong to the hallowed circle. Perhaps it is as well. If the bailiffs who evict tenants who do not pay their rent to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners were included in the sacred caste, people might have doubts. But in the case of an Archbishop with £15,000 yearly, a palace, and a seat in the House of Lords, and the goodwill of the B.B.C., who can have qualms? Obviously, such a person basks in the sunshine of the successful.

There should be, there ought to be, widespread astonishment that the consecrated and high-salaried sons of God should have ignored the still, small voice of humanity until the nightmare of disestablishment and disendowment under a Socialist State disturbed their comfortable inertia. The Bishops of the Established Church have been legislators for centuries, and their record in the House of Lords is not only a very bad one, but a most ironic comment on the effect of the alleged guidance of the "Holy Spirit." All through the nineteenth century the Bishops voted with the Die-Hards and the Cave-men of the Tory Party. Despite heavenly guidance, they could not see that it was wrong to hang starving people for stealing five shillingsworth of goods, and unwise to exclude from political power great masses of law-abiding people. In the long struggle for Roman Catholics, Jews, Nonconformists, and Freethinkers for civil rights, in the crusade for the Factory Acts, and amending the penal code, and in the building up of a national system of education, the House of Lords has been in conflict with the House of Commons, and in that battle the Bishops always stood with the aristocrats against the people. Was this due to the "Holy Spirit"?

A man's humanism is determined by his attitude towards militarism. In what manner has this so-called Church of England "upheld the honour of humanity," as the Archbishop himself expresses it? War has been waged in every quarter of the globe during the past hundred and fifty years, and the British soldiers have fought Frenchmen, Germans, Russians, Turks, Chinese, Indians, Americans, Egyptians, Abyssinians, and Zulus, to mention only some of the antagonists. The Bench of Bishops, in the House of Lords, acting under direct divine guidance, never once protested against the loss of life, and horrors of war, but invariably supported the Government of the day. Not only did they shout with the mob, but they, and their satellites, blessed regimental flags, christened battleships, and arranged Te Deums to celebrate the victories. Indeed, in the matter of war, the Right-Reverend Fathers-in-God have always been on the side of the aristocracy. "Yes," said grim old Thomas Carlyle years ago, "the idea of a pig-headed soldier who will obey orders and fire on his own father at the command of an officer, is a great comfort to the aristocratic mind."

There are plenty of men like the Archbishop of Canterbury in Democratic politics. Like Mr. Facing-both-ways, they have a taste for taking things easily. They like to patronize Democracy without losing the advantages arising from friendliness towards Autocracy. They prefer to enter the arena when the fighting is nearly over, and to share in the victories that were won by better men than themselves. Suède-glove reformers, like the Archbishop, have never been wanting when they scent profit to themselves. Their rôle is to rebuke and insult the pioneers, and then, at the crucial moment, change their uniforms, and pretend that they were in the



ranks of the victorious army all the time. Besides, this attitude has its attendant risks.

So long as the clergy are manacled to the Christian Bible it is well nigh impossible for them to do anything "to uphold the honour of humanity." There is no escape from this dilemma. The Christian Superstition has its roots in sheer, unadulterated barbarism, and the clergy are actually paid to perpetuate this savagery. Barbarism is not too harsh a description. For the wisest King mentioned in their precious Bible had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines; David, described as "a man after God's own heart," was a murderer; and the pretended evangel of Jesus flames the fires of hell over a distracted universe. The difficulty is a real one. Before the Archbishop of Canterbury, a mere bishop, or any ordinary parson, can raise a finger to "uphold the honour of humanity," in this twentieth century, it must follow of necessity that he must throw overboard the old-world ignorance and superstition embodied in his creed. It is the Christian Religion itself which is at fault. In following its tenets, in even pretending to believe its myths and legends, the Head of the State Church condemns himself to the unhappy position of being the one-eyed patriarch among the blind. And the soothing reflection that it may be due to the inspiration of a "spirit," however holy, does not help the matter in any way. It still leaves this Church of England the most militant of the forces of reaction, and the deadly enemy of Democracy.

MIMNERMUS.

## God's Justice

### A STORY FOR CHILDREN

By this time all you boys and girls will have returned to school from your holidays, either by the sea or in the country. But, of course, you will not have forgotten all the good times you had when you were away. That afternoon, for instance, when you buried Daddy in the sands—all but his face, I hope—and then sat on his tummy, refusing to budge until he promised to give you an extra penny. And then the famous occasion when Uncle Duggie of the Pierrots offered to give a box of sweets to the boy or girl who sang a song the best. I wonder if you had a shot at it yourself and, if so, whether you were lucky enough to win the prize.

While such happy memories are still fairly fresh in your minds, I am going to tell you a true story about my own holidays. I was staying at the time with an aunt in Lucerne, which is a town in Switzerland, on the shore of a beautiful lake of the same name. My aunt lives in a cottage built almost entirely of wood, which the Swiss people call a *châlet* (pronounced "shallay"). Apart from eating too much and bathing in the sun until your skin looks like a boiled beetroot, there are lots of other things to do. You can go up several of the smaller mountains in a sort of railway called a funicular. These are really tram-cars that are pulled up the mountain-sides by steel ropes, and it is very exciting to go up them, especially if you sit in a back seat and look down the steep slope as the car moves slowly up the rails. Then there are charabancs which take you for rides to other parts of Switzerland, and even as far as the Black Forest in Germany.

One day I went for a trip round the Lake of Lucerne in one of these charabancs. We had a very amusing and talkative guide with us, who told us all

about the various mountains and villages that we passed on the way. When he had nothing to tell us, he would suddenly begin to "yodle." I must explain to you that "yodling" is a special way of singing that the Swiss people have. It is very pretty when you hear it at a distance, echoing among the mountains. But our guide was, of course, quite close to us, and he had a very powerful voice. So when he burst out yodling for the first time, we all nearly jumped out of our seats in alarm! After a time, however, we got more used to it.

One of the villages we passed through was called Arth-Goldau, which is a railway junction to-day. It did not look as interesting or as pretty as many of the villages we had already seen. But that was before the guide had told us the true history of the place, which I am now going to tell you. First of all, I want you to imagine a pretty valley with a few small villages scattered about it. On either side of the valley are high mountains, and one of the highest is a peak called the Rossberg. The side of the Rossberg which overlooks the valley is almost a sheer precipice of bare rock.

Now if you could go back one hundred and thirty years, and stand just where our charabanc had stopped, you would see four little villages where the one village of Arth-Goldau now stands. About eight hundred people lived in these four villages, and most of them were hard-working and pious farmers, and their wives and children. If you had been there on the evening of Saturday, September 1, 1806, you would probably have seen the men and women returning from their work in the fields. Later on, if you had peeped into the *châlet* windows, you might have seen mothers putting their babies to bed, and other children saying their prayers before putting themselves to bed. Everything was quiet and peaceful, and everybody believed that God would watch over them during the night and give them restful sleep, so that they might wake refreshed on the Sunday morning and go to church to thank Him for His goodness to them.

Suddenly, early on Sunday morning while it was still dark, the people living in other villages not far away heard a terrible rumbling sound, which echoed and boomed like thunder all along the valley. Next morning, when it was light enough to see, they were horrified to discover that Goldau and the other three villages had quite disappeared. A huge part of the Rossberg had broken off and tumbled down into the valley, completely burying the four villages and all the people in them. There was nothing left but a tremendous jumble of rocks, boulders and earth. Eight hundred men, women and children had been crushed to death in a few minutes. Not a single person in those four villages escaped alive.

Now, boys and girls, I want you to think of this terrible catastrophe, and to ask yourselves what the other villagers might have thought about it. They must certainly have had friends and relations living in Goldau. Were these friends and relations so much more wicked than the rest of the people living in the same valley? Was that why God allowed the mountain to crush them all suddenly in their sleep? The Bible tells how God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone because all the people in them were so wicked. But do you believe that story? What about the young children and tiny babies? Surely you don't believe that they were all very wicked too?

You know yourselves how angry you feel when you have been unfairly punished by a teacher or one of your parents. It may be that you are merely scolded or given a rap on the knuckles. But unless



you know that you have done wrong, you think that your punishment was most unfair. Can you really believe that *all* the men, women, and children in Goldau were so much worse than their friends and relations who were not killed by the avalanche? Can you believe that they all *deserved* to be killed in that terrible way?

In school most of you are told every morning about the good and loving God who knows of *every* little bird that falls, and who grieves over a sheep that strays. But look what this loving God allows to happen to people like you and me. He sends floods to one part of the world, with the result that many people are drowned and thousands of homes are destroyed. This happened in America a short while ago. To another part of the world He sends no rain at all for weeks on end, with the result that people die of thirst and heat. Then He plays about with us at sea and sends storms which wreck the ships and drowns the people in them. In San Francisco, some years ago, He sent a terrible earthquake which ruined nearly the whole town and killed thousands more men, women, and children. Isn't it absurd to suppose that all these happenings are the work of a God who is loving and fair and just? Why, if the world had been made by a madman, things couldn't have been much worse! And who wants to worship or pray to a lunatic?

You boys and girls must learn to think for yourselves about these things. Don't swallow everything that your teacher tells you about God and Jesus. Most of the Bible is just fairy stories. You can see for yourselves that if God is really almighty, then He could easily prevent earthquakes and landslides from happening where there are people. And if God were really fair and just, He wouldn't kill hundreds of people all at once, including a lot of innocent babies. But if God *can't* prevent these terrible things from happening, then it is untrue to say that He is almighty. And if He could prevent them, but doesn't want to, then it is untrue to say that He is loving and just.

Some teachers or clergymen may tell you that it isn't God who does these things to us, but the Devil. Then you should say: "Well, the Devil must be stronger than God." And if the teacher or clergyman gets angry with you, it is best to say nothing more in the meanwhile. They only get angry with you because they have no sensible answer to your remark. Of course, all the stories you are told about God and the Devil are as untrue as any other fairy-tales. But a lot of teachers are *afraid* to tell you the real truth about the Bible and God. And when you grow older you will find out why they are afraid. It isn't because they are afraid of an Almighty God who might be spiteful to them. It is because they are afraid of other grown-ups who are more powerful than they are, and who get paid hundreds of pounds a year for repeating the old fairy-stories in the Bible. These people are the Bishops and priests of the churches. How these Bishops and priests became so powerful is another story—and it is a long story—which I hope to tell you about some other time.

BEATRICE FRASER.

Perhaps one in ten among those who think, is conscious that his judgment is being warped by prejudice, yet even in him the warp is not adequately allowed for. Doubtless in nearly every field of inquiry emotion is a disturbing intruder; mostly there is some preconception and some amour propre that resists disproof of it. But a peculiarity of sociology is that the emotion with which its facts and conclusions are regarded, have unusual strength.—*Spencer*.

## Unilateral

EVERY now and again there are what are called "vogues" with particular words. At the moment the word "unilateral" is being extensively used. "Tendencious" is another favoured word. Strangely enough, both of these words tend to emphasize phases of thought which the Freethinker wishes to emphasize. There are lessons embodied in each which illustrate the value of Freethinking. If the reader's leaning is towards logomachy, he can hardly do better than entrap anyone willing to listen into something more than a casual discussion of each of these words.

We pick up the newspaper and find it is the Japanese opinion that some note of the Chinese is "unilateral." The insurgents make the same charge against the Government pronouncements in Spain. All they mean is that the document issued is *one-sided*. The charges are probably true in all such cases, for, when it is a question of winning a war, a lie is regarded as a very pleasant help in any threatened trouble, and Ministers of Propaganda are generally regarded as very important personages when the game of war is afoot. Any good lie is regarded as a helpful contribution towards winning the war, and a good fluent liar withal, such as Kipling's "Paget, M.P.," reaches the Peerage.

Morality is in essence the art by which life is made more tolerable, and from that it follows that morality is, ultimately, the type of conduct which tends to assist living. So that when the game becomes one of *killing*, it can be plausibly argued that all morality goes temporarily by the board. It unfortunately suffers more than temporarily, but this consideration is not relevant at the moment. Let the war-time ethic, or elimination of it, be put to one side, and let the examination of the term "one-sided" be considered in its relation to the less manly and more menial business of living in times of peace.

For the unilateral statement meets with considerable favour when the compulsion to issue it, which war engenders, does not exist. The one-sided statement is in fact almost the normal utterance of the normal man. All men are Liars, said the Psalmist. It is unnecessary to raise prejudice by applying the term Liar to those who habitually make use of the unilateral statement. Let it be admitted straightway that those who are guilty of it boast amongst their numbers those who would, in the common phrase, scorn to tell a lie. They give the correct change, they keep their appointments, they pay their bills; but when they embark upon a political, sociological or religious discussion (people, it will be noted, rarely *chat* on these themes) they are unilateral. They pick their facts and, comically enough, accuse their opponents of picking theirs. They are sceptical about their opponents' facts, and careless about the value of the authority of one of their own helpful pieces of evidence. On these matters, they haven't the slightest conscience.

Many urbane persons will rant and be grossly unfair when their pet weakness is touched upon. Why they are doing so is because of reasons they never try to discover. The will to believe is there, and when that exists they will never be able to see wood for trees. Mrs. Jones (for instance) has brought up five children and taken care to see that each child has been wakened up in the early hours of the morning to be fed. Mrs. Robinson says this is unnecessary. Mrs. Jones's pride is aroused. Has *she*, who possesses experience (look at her babies!), to listen to young Mrs. Robinson, who is humbly trying to find out the best that science has to say about rearing her



first born? Mrs. Jones may, if she's not careful, to the end of her life get quite violent and unreasonable when arguing this point. She will look for supporting evidence everywhere, and carefully pick the bits that help her. She will do all this in order not to admit that that funny Robinson woman was right. Twenty years after she will, of course, have quite forgotten the Robinson episode; she may even have forgotten Mrs. Robinson—but it was the Robinson woman all the same who accounts for Mrs. Jones showing quite unreasonable emotion when the subject of night-feeding for infants comes up for discussion.

Reasons for all such unbalanced manifestations there always are. They may not be, like this, the result of an individual experience; they may simply arise from a over-cargo of primitive thought, the impulse to fight for which appears, very easily, to be implanted by a passion for Righteousness, or by God Himself. Some tabu laid down by tribal chiefs or medicine-men tens of thousands of years ago may account for one's impulse to hit quite violently that calm, nicely-spoken, old gentleman in the chair opposite to you. Oh, one feels so sure that the impulse is from On High! Why, if all believed as that old man does, where would our business be in a few years? What would happen to Ellen and Tommie when they grow up? What would happen to us all when we die and the Lord gets his chance?

The first step to take—one does not underrate its hardness—is to realize that when we *feel* to the extent that brings about such regrettable sequels instead of it signifying that we are unmistakably right, by far the greater chance there is that we are, in some important respect at least, unmistakably wrong; and that it is because we are half aware that someone has discovered one of our irrationalities, that we feel resentment so strongly. A friend once said to me "I disliked that book of *Elizabeth* so much that I suppose she succeeded in treading on my corns." Now there is the attitude from which there is hope. Certainly no progress can be made towards a greater rationality unless such a possibility be admitted. As David Hume said, "All doctrines are to be suspected which are favoured by our passions."

Party Politics works in the medium of the Unilateral. Even scientific sociologists cannot free themselves altogether from the personal equation, which means, in degree, the same thing. They endeavour to cut themselves off from considerations of race and country and religion; to weed out their personal interests; to forget their business and their wives; before coming to conclusions. A big task! Can we wonder that they fail? Nay! they do not fail entirely, but only in degree. They do make the effort, and that is valuable. If they put themselves to discipline, they meet with some reward; they obtain the respect of the judicially-minded who pay them the compliment of reading them eclectically and improving the value of their work by their reasoned criticism. And if a scientific sociology is hindered by the personal equation, what about Religion, where we find the Unilateral Enthroned, which starts with simple postulates such as: The Bible is God's Book, and fights for it fiercely and unscrupulously, while persuading itself it does so from a High Sense of Religious Duty. The Religionist represents indeed the quintessence of Special Pleading. He finds himself with a Creed and a Loyalty, and throughout his life he generally manages to fight what he considers to be the Good Fight.

The Good Fight to the Freethinker does not take that shape. Admitted, if you want the admission, that the Freethinker has, just the same, his obsessions, his loves, his prejudices, to examine, and,

where required, to weed out. The lesson that he has learnt from his responsible teachers is, however, this precise lesson of self-analysis and self-control. He may not always learn his lesson sufficiently well, but when he sins, he sins against the light. Whilst others plead their briefs, he listens, examines, and selects. He realizes that his opinions should not be uttered carelessly, and that the web of belief is changed in texture by the common speech of men and women, and he derives from that thought a proper sense of responsibility.

T. H. ELSTOB.

## Change in Science and Religion

IN *Science and the Modern World*, Professor A. N. Whitehead states that "science is even more changeable than religion"; and a further statement is that we do not now accept all the conclusions of Galileo and other early modern scientists.

The question, Which of the two features referred to has changed most? probably does not admit of a definite answer. And it is likely that Rationalists, while holding the problem to be insoluble, will regard the Professor's former statement as more than doubtful, whether we think of the quality or quantity of the change.

If, however, persons who have little or no acquaintance with the history of science and religious ideas are led to suppose that the two lines of variation are similar in character, they will be seriously misled. Science, since it began in the early era of civilization, has been, as it is now, a progressively increasing mass of genuine, agreed and permanent knowledge, and except for the great hiatus of the European Middle Ages has been fairly continuous, slow at first, but then accelerating, for some 3,000 years. This, of course, follows from the correct methods of investigation employed. Science, as has often been said of late, makes a gradual approach to the whole truth about the universe. And though "scientists are fallible," though here and there conclusions reached have been disestablished as a result of further investigation, the main mass of truth stands firm and practically unassailable.

On the contrary, theological, demonological and allied conclusions are not based on evidence as that word is understood in the scientific field, viz.: that of observation, experiment, and interpretation in congruity with experience and already established knowledge, but on the contrary, principally on such supposititious sources as intuition or other activity of "inner consciousness"—though, of course, some of the notions were attempts to explain real, natural phenomena, including unconsciousness and dreams. Hence in this field there is no increasing mass of knowledge or agreed conclusions, but on the contrary, in forward communities, a mere skeleton of the earlier body of transcendental doctrine and practice. The reduction has been going on—except again, in the case of the Medieval European gap—fairly continuously for some three thousand years.

In illustration of this point we may briefly recall, e.g., the religious condition of ancient Egypt, where the priests elaborated a mass of theology and other occultry, some of which is familiar to us: the two thousand gods, whose names are known with the Triads or Trinities (father-mother-son) and Enneads or companies of nine or more gods, including the great Osiris, "the god-man who suffered, died, rose again, and reigned eternally in heaven . . . the god of gods, lord of lords . . . who made men and women to be born again"; also "spirits, good and



bad, witches, fiends and devils, which they tried to cajole, wheedle or placate by means of spells, magical names, words of power, amulets of all kinds, etc."; "Every act of daily life had some magical or religious observance associated with it." (This information and the quotations are from the British Museum Egyptian Guide). More or less similar features existed in other ancient communities, though some, if not all, of these seem to have escaped the fierce religious obsession of the old Hebrews.

Then we note the rise of Rationalism in ancient Greece, and its repetition in early modern times; then at the Reformation the relinquishment by a large body of Religionists of a variety of doctrines and practices formerly held and followed with little or no question; and more recently, the abandonment by many members of forward communities of most or all of the still popular ecclesiastical creeds and observances; and this has been accompanied by the progressive secularization of institutions.

The second statement of Professor Whitehead, though verbally true, leaves much to be desired in its possible connotation. We not only continue to accept many of the important conclusions of early modern scientists, but also of the scientist-philosophers who lived some two thousand years earlier. Of these we note the fundamental discovery of Thales, that the movements of the celestial bodies was not determined by the wills of gods, but by natural law—a conclusion substantiated by his prediction (from data of Mesopotamian origin) of the eclipse of May 28, 585 B.C. ("There were astronomical observatories in the great cities of the Mesopotamian valley as far back as the eighth century B.C., when professional astronomers were taking regular observations of the heavens.") Comparable in importance was the conclusion of the Hippocratic physicians that disease was not due to the action of gods, the Sacred Disease (epilepsy) in particular being "no more sacred than other diseases, but like them to have its own physis" (natural growth, development). Aristotle and others denied creation or annihilation of substance, and the great Stagirite made many discoveries in various fields, including the notable one that pectoral fins, wings, forelegs and arms were homologous organs; and by such work, and that on generation and development, he made a close approach to the principle of evolution. Countless more detailed discoveries were made, which, like the foregoing more general ones, still stand. (The quotations in this paragraph are from Dr. Singer's *Religion and Science*).

As is well known, this natural and rational procedure was lost in Europe and the nearer East, when Christianity adopted a mass of old legends and myths, taught the "relinquishment of this world" (with the corollary that natural investigation was useless and even sinful), and held that the world would soon come to an end. "The Day of the Lord," writes Dr. Singer, "rang the death-knell of science."

J. REEVES.

There are persons who never run into any extravagance, because they are so buttressed up with the opinions of others on all sides, that they cannot lean much to one side or the other; they are so little moved with any kind of reasoning, that they remain at an equal distance from every extreme, and are never very far from the truth, because the slowness of their faculties will not suffer them to make much progress in error. These are persons of great judgment. The scales of the mind are pretty sure to remain even when there is nothing in them.—*Hazlitt*.

## Acid Drops

The Recorder of Birmingham, H. J. Wallington, K.C., is apparently a very conscientious gentleman, certainly where his religion is manifested. It is to be hoped that he is equally conscientious where non-religious folk are concerned. But, according to a report in the *Birmingham Post* Mr. Wallington is specially particular where taking the oath is concerned. He demands "absolute silence" in court when the oath is being taken, no matter whatever is being done. Everyone is, one presumes, to stand at attention, not, Mr. Wallington explains, out of respect to him, but "as a courtesy to Almighty God, to whom reference is being made in the preliminary attestation of the person in the witness-box or the jury-box." We wonder whether the Recorder is equally particular while the affirmation of a witness or a jury-man is being taken, and whether he would demand that everyone in court must be absolutely still and silent during the ceremony? We suspect not.

We venture to express the opinion that the Recorder is saying what he does say because his fetichistic notion of the power and value of the religious oath is to him something specially sacred. We do not imagine for a moment that if a Hindu or a Mohammedan were swearing, or a Freethinker were affirming, that he would demand the same immobility and silence of all present. In the absence of any precise information we beg to ask Mr. Wallington a few questions:—

(1) Has he observed whether the taking of an oath, even when it is done in the most courteous manner with regard to Almighty God, has any remarkable, or even observable, influence in inducing a greater measure of truth from the witness?

(2) Does he personally place greater reliance on the testimony of a witness who takes the oath?

As every witness before him, with a few exceptions, takes the oath, how does he discriminate between them on a question of honesty or truthfulness?

(3) If, after having seen the oath taken, he still has to apply other tests to decide whether the witness is speaking the truth or not, might he not save time by applying these tests without bothering about the oath at all?

(4) Is he aware that as Recorder he is by the law of this country compelled to admit the evidence of a Freethinker on his word of honour that he will speak the truth, while if the man is religious, and the oath is not contrary to his religious belief, he must insist on that witness swearing before he will listen to him?

(5) Does not the fact of the acceptance of the testimony of a Freethinker on his word of honour, and the assumption of its sufficing, while the Christian must take a religious oath in addition, carry with it the suggestion that the Christian is not quite so truthful as the average unbeliever?

(6) Is the Recorder aware that the essence of the oath is a form of trial by ordeal, and that it is virtually calling upon God to punish the witness if he does not speak the truth?

(7) As there are millions of lies told in the courts of England, many in even the court over which Mr. Wallington presides, and nothing happens to the liars, does not the whole proceeding savour of the ridiculous?

(8) Does the Recorder really believe that Almighty God would be seriously offended if someone blew his nose, or shuffled his feet, or whispered to his neighbour while the oath was being taken? And if so, can Mr. Wallington be surprised if Almighty God—assuming him to come up to the standard of intelligence in man—regards the remarks which the Recorder is reported to have made as exhibiting a curious mixture of pomposity and foolishness? We think that if we had a God we would trust him to look after his own dignity, and not bother very much whether silence was preserved in a court or not.

"A Faith to Keep and to Give," is the title of a leading article in the *Christian World*. It reminds us of Max O'Rell's famous appreciation of England's benevo-



lent "gift" to many native races: "You give us your country and we give you our religion." In the process, the native races were also "given away."

Professor Charles Singer, of London University, attacks Christian so-called "charity," in his new book called *The Christian Approach to Jews*. He complains bitterly that most Christians possess only an elementary sense of toleration. He says:—

In my judgment it is the first charge on Christians, and especially on Christian priests, to stress constantly in practice the duty to exercise the elementary principles of Christianity towards those who differ from them. If those principles do not prevail, the existence of the organization of the Christian Churches is a mockery and an insult to the human spirit. And it is a fact that those principles do not prevail.

We imagine it is mere flattery—or a desire to shame Christians into active toleration—which asserts the obviously baseless claim that "Christian principles" disagree with the historic Christian practice of intolerance. One is the plain expression of the other.

Kagawa is a Japanese Christian preacher. He visited England recently when he delighted enthusiastic congregations here by his eloquent fundamentalistic ravings of the most benighted character. Now the Rev. D. Glan Morgan, of Leicester, writes about "the most incredible rumour" that this Japanese Christian minister agrees with the Japanese invasion of China. We are surprised at his surprise.

Some time ago the Secular Society Limited, published a little book by Mr. Belborough on *Arms and the Clergy*. That book gave a documented record of what the Christian clergy, of all denominations, actually said during the last war. Dr. Glan Morgan should read this book. It may not lead Dr. Morgan to recant what he has said, but it may at least save him deceiving himself. And deceiving oneself is far more demoralizing than deceiving others.

From the Plymouth *Evening Herald*, we note that the Rev. Harold Griffiths told the Youth Rally of Hope Baptist Church that 50,000,000 Hindus have broken away directly from their own body, and have been converted to Christianity during the last ten years. This, he said, is one of the "little known facts." We are used to a big drum display whenever a dozen, or less, converts to Christianity are made from another faith, and that this respectable accretion to Christianity remains *little known* bears, to us, only one explanation. The rally, we are informed, at which this item of Hope was announced was conducted by representatives of Churches all over Plymouth and district and about 220 people attended.

A fifteen-year-old Bingley girl is missing from home, and a Bradford newspaper informs us that the search is being assisted by a tobacconist who has the useful "gift of rod-divining." This gentleman, we are told, walks about with a piece of whalebone in his hands and hopes, in this way, to pull off something spectacular. A picture in addition features the gifted person "in action." The "diviner," historically considered, specialized originally in such cases as witch-craft and "tokens of virginity"; more recently he took up the finding of water. Now he is an adept at finding hidden treasure; the bodies of murdered people; the whereabouts of live ones. *Divining*, in short, comes very near to the divine; it is unadulterated nonsense.

Durham City Council is another of those secular bodies that feel their deliberations need external support. The meetings open with prayer. Responsibility for their conclusions is now, presumably, out of their hands, and we trust the electors will realize this when they next appear for re-election.

The Australian Catholic Truth Society has a little booklet on *Holy Water*. It tells us that Holy Water "is an antidote against spiritual and corporal disease." "There is nothing which puts the devils to flight like Holy Water," said St. Teresa:—

When a priest—using the liturgical prayers of the Church—consecrates water to sacred use, he first exorcises and blesses salt, then water, and mixes both in the name of the Most Holy Trinity. By such blessing the priest withdraws these substances from the power of the devil, who, since the fall, has corrupted to a certain extent all animate and inanimate things.

The faithful are recommended "to take with them from the Church a little phial of the Easter water for the sprinkling of their families and houses and belongings." Naturally a charge to recoup expenses must be made for the phial. With Ingersoll, we believe that, with the addition of a little soap, water, holy or unholy, can be very useful.

The Catholic *Holy Name Monthly* for June contains an article on "Priesthood":—

Every Catholic worthy of the name is possessed of a spirit of gratitude and respect for his priest, the anointed one of God, because of the sacred nature of his calling and the wonderful powers conferred on the priesthood for the salvation of immortal souls. In the words of St. Augustine, that outstanding genius whose brilliant intellect has enlightened every age which followed his own, might I say of the holy priesthood—"At the sight of so great a privilege, Heaven is astounded, earth is amazed, man fears, hell shudders, the devil trembles, the angels adore." . . .

St. Lawrence Justinian has very aptly and concisely described the power of the priest in these words: "O mighty power. At whose will bread is changed into the Body of Christ; the word descends from Heaven in the flesh, and is found on the table of the altar. That which has never been given to the angels was freely bequeathed to priests. The angels minister before the throne of God, priests hold Him in their hands, give Him to others, and receive Him themselves."

St. Ephrem has told us that—"The priest is a stupendous miracle, an inexpressible power; he comes in contact with Heaven, dwells with the angels, and treats familiarly with God.

"Now, Willie, when you meet the Holy Father in the street, don't forget to bow, make the sign of the cross, and say 'Good Morning, your Reverence.'"

## Fifty Years Ago

WHILE Christianity is dissolving away, the age is full of hypocritical compromises and bastard parties. Not only are there Christian Socialists—which is not unnatural—but there are Christian Agnostics, and even Christian Positivists. The *Pall Mall Gazette* gives a lengthy account of this new sect, which seats Jesus Christ and Auguste Comte together at the head of the table. How this couple would agree if they were alive, is another matter. Probably, before Jesus had conversed with Comte for ten minutes, he would be calling on the devils to come out of him. Christian Positivists are certainly a strange sect even in the century of Mormonism, Jezreelism, and Glory-Holism. The only thing required to crown the edifice of absurdity is a sect of Christian Atheists.

We will finish this excursion among the Christians with a fine old port-wine sample. The newspapers report that at a banquet of the North St. Pancras Conservative Association, held last Monday evening at the Holborn Restaurant, the Rev. C. Meckeson delivered himself on the Irish question. Waxing indignant over the behaviour of the Irish members in the House of Commons, he declared that "if he had his will he would roll them down Parliament Hill on to the railway, and let the engines finish them as they deserve." There now! That is quite refreshing. Mr. Mackeson is a clergyman of the good old sort. The spirit of the Lord is upon him, and he has evidently been washed in a very large quantity of the blood of the lamb.



# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

S. B. COLE.—The copy of the *Freethinker* sent you is one of a distribution that is being carried on with a view to introducing the paper to possibly new readers. We cannot always make sure that these copies fall into new hands.

R. LAMONT.—We do not expect everyone to agree with our conduct of the paper, and Mr. Fletcher was quite within his rights in saying what he did.

J. HUMPHREY.—The specimen you send is along the usual line of religious literature intended for mass consumption. We can only hope that the "mass" is not quite so stupid as the literature distributed would imply.

W. WATKIN.—Thanks for suggestion. We may take the subject you suggest for one of the *Pamphlets for the People*, but we already have quite a number noted.

H.W. (Plymouth) B. L. BOWERS.—Thanks for cuttings. To Advertising and Circulating the *Freethinker*.—E. Swale, 5s.

J. MACKINNON.—Apologies for error.

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.

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

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

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

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

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

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.

## Sugar Plums

To-day (October 24), Mr. Cohen will lecture in the McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow, at 7 o'clock. A good muster of friends from the district is anticipated. Admission is free, but "donation tickets," admitting to reserved seats, will be available.

A "Social" organized by the Executive of the National Secular Society will take place at the Bishopsgate Institute, Bishopsgate, E.C., on Saturday, November 13. There will be the usual musical entertainment, dancing, and refreshments provided. Tickets will be 2s. 6d. each, and doors will be opened at 6.30. Tickets may be obtained from the *Freethinker* office. Mr. Cohen is taking a Sunday off on purpose to be present, and hopes to meet many of his London friends, and if possible, provincial ones.

It should be noted that Bishopsgate Institute is centrally situated within three minutes' of Liverpool Street Stations (L.N.E.R. and Underground), also Broad Street, I.M.S., Tram Routes serving N.E. London, terminate outside the door, and buses from different parts pass the entrance. The Institute is well known as an educational and cultural centre, and the large hall in which the Social will be held will please dancers and non-dancers alike.

The Picton Hall was comfortably filled on Sunday last to listen to Mr. Cohen's lecture on "Are We Civilized?" The Picton Hall is always a pleasant sight with its rising tiers of seats. Everyone can see the speaker, and what is equally to be noted, the speaker can see each of his audience. In this case, the speaker was rewarded with an attentive body of listeners, marred a little by two or three who could not rest happily until they had demonstrated their stupidity by blundering in with questions that had no pertinency to what had been said. They, perhaps, helped one to understand why Liverpool has, or will have, one of the largest cathedrals in Britain. Mr. Shortt occupied the chair.

Two more of Mr. Cohen's *Pamphlets for the People* Series are now ready. The two new titles are "The Church's Fight for the Child," and "Giving 'em Hell." Each pamphlet extends to sixteen pages, and in these days of dear printing offers a wonderful penny-worth. Many of our friends find them excellent for carrying round to give to suitable friends. We commend this practice to all who are interested in Freethought propaganda. The series of ten pamphlets will be sent post free for 1s. More pamphlets are in preparation.

A small book, with paper covers, has been published by Mr. A. Z. Abushady, with the title *At Random Thoughts on Humanism*. It contrives in seven chapters to say in a clear style, much that is worth saying on the human being, dweller in East or West. The author is an Egyptian who has mastered English, and he turns it to good account in writing on The Breeding of Mankind, What makes a Man Civilized? On Genius, Democracy or Dictatorship? Organized Religion and Human Progress, Equality between the Sexes, and Economic Democracy. There are extensive references showing the wide reading of the author, but the title of the book should have had more attention; it is liable to misinterpretation although no reader can question the high seriousness and sincerity it contains. In the preface an address is given, 60 Rue Menascue, Alexandria, Egypt, and a copy of the book will ably demonstrate that fundamental truths are above race, colour and nationality.

It is interesting to note that the late President Masaryk was born and baptized into the Catholic faith; but he became greatly dissatisfied with religion, and on reaching manhood severed himself from the Church. He is said to have belonged at one time to the "Bohemian Brothers," one of the Protestant offshoots of the Hussite heresy, but though a minister of this sect officiated at the funeral, we are told, "there was little or no sign of Christianity about his obsequies." The late President held, we believe, some very nebulous deistic beliefs, but the accounts of his life showed how little time he had for organized religion.

The Catholic papers are evidently seriously annoyed at the prospect of there being held in London, in 1938, an International Freethought Conference, and are inciting their readers to write to Members of Parliament to urge that it be stopped. That, of course, is to be expected from a Church that has always been one of the deadliest enemies to independent thinking in any form. The form of the letters that have appeared in Catholic and other papers points to their being dictated, as the individual variations are slight and unimportant. Not very long ago these people were protesting against the King being compelled to be a Protestant. That, they said, was a denial of freedom of choice to the King. So far they were correct, but we fail to see the difference between denying freedom of choice to the King, and denying freedom of speech to non-religionists.

But, as usual, lies are plentiful in this Roman Catholic campaign—it would not be a true Catholic campaign were it otherwise. To protest against an International Freethought Conference would probably give rise to the query: Why not? (After all the Roman Church is a



foreign Church, and there still exist laws in this country actually forbidding the existence of some Roman Catholic Orders in Great Britain.) So another title is found by writing on the proposed "League of the Godless" meeting in September next. That title is calculated to make the skin of timid old ladies and men with the mentality of the Stone Age shiver. It will to them conjure up visions of bloodshed, even greater than that of the massacre of St. Bartholomew, tortures as bad as those of the Inquisition, and uncleanness as great as anything that existed when the Papacy was most powerful. But there is no such gathering as a League of the Godless contemplated. It is the International Federation of Freethinkers that is meeting in September. The Roman Catholic papers know this quite well, but a lie more or less where Roman Catholicism is concerned matters very little.

The Failsworth Secular Society continues its steady work for Freethought. On Sunday last, Mr. Bedborough lectured there and reports a most successful meeting. On Sunday next, November 7, the Society stages its own Orchestral Society, and visitors will have the opportunity of listening to a first-class musical performance. The Society has its own building, which includes a club-room, and various other attachments. It has exerted a very notable influence on the life of Failsworth, a fact which has been generally admitted.

A South African reader, a lady, has a quantity of Freethought books and a bookcase which she is willing to give to one who is prepared to pay carriage for same. This is a very generous offer, and probably some of our South African readers may avail themselves of it. The lady in question is 85 years of age, writes a strong, firm hand, which goes well with a strong and evidently lively intellect. Letters may be sent to the Editor of *Freethinker* marked *Books*. They will be at once forwarded.

## Do We Obey Nature?

FATHER VINCENT McNABB is reported (in the *Listener*) recently as claiming that "one of Bacon's wisest and most brilliant epigrams" is "Nature to be commanded must be obeyed." There is no reason to complain of the use of the word "obeyed" in the connexion in which Bacon is writing, but it is evident that "obeying Nature" was never intended by Bacon to imply accepting without resistance or evasion "the slings and arrows" which men have had to fight in order to exist.

Bacon's meaning is amply obvious from Joseph Devey's edition of *Novum Organum*, where the Aphorism (Book I., iii.) begins thus:—

Knowledge and human power are synonymous, since the ignorance of the cause frustrates the effect; for NATURE IS ONLY SUBDUED BY SUBMISSION.

Bacon's emphasis on "knowledge" makes quite clear that he meant what scientific minds have always believed, namely that Nature can never be ignored, and that we must first learn what is Nature's inevitable law and base all our own procedure on a recognition of that law.

Naturally Father McNabb reads into Bacon's philosophy some theological nonsense of his own creed. We will say in passing that it is only Gods and Saviours and Divinely-inspired prophets and priests who have professed that they could afford to ignore or over-rule natural law. Only a Joshua could be silly enough to tell the sun to stand still. Only a Jonah could boast that he had lived for three

days and three nights in the belly of a whale. Only a Jesus Christ could declare himself able to restore life to the dead. Only money-grubbing priests could affront human intelligence by swearing that the toenails of a dead "saint" could cure measles and yarts.

In saying that "the inevitability of obedience to Nature is accepted by the modern mind" (as it is), Father McNabb contradicts his own reference to "we men who are beings with a free will." If he accepts the "inevitability" he mentions, it must be a poor sort of "free will" possessed by "we men" who "turn whithersoever he will has no choice but to obey." It is all very well for Fr. McNabb to soften the blow by saying that "every day and everywhere we are giving Nature hardly less than a slave's obedience." The word "hardly" is meaningless in this connexion.

But is the word "obedience" the best word to describe man's attitude towards Nature? There is, of course, a terminological confusion because the word "law" has more than one meaning. Every dictionary clearly distinguishes between:—

(O.D.) Law—community rule.

invariable sequence between certain conditions and phenomena

but religious writers very often deliberately confuse the two "laws." Also there is a difference between a Prime Minister "obeying" a King, and "submitting" to him a decree which in a democracy a King has no alternative but to accept. We submit to Nature's "laws" in the sense of studying Nature's activities and using her methods where mankind will benefit thereby; evading, fighting, resisting and diverting Nature's apparent antagonism to man's welfare. We are constantly investigating Nature's forces in the hope of discovering that Nature—when we know her better—can be "harnessed" and made obedient to man's will.

There is nothing quite so universally called "Nature's last word" as DEATH. Death may be natural enough. But we do not "obey" Nature's constant threats to human life. We believe with ample justification that we have not yet discovered the limit of natural longevity, or what are Nature's conditions for health and long life. We can scarcely be said to "obey" laws of which we know so little.

Father McNabb's sermon is a mere expression of his Church's dogmatic opposition to human investigation. He says things to gild the pill he administers, but his main design is reiteration of the gospel of obedience. Obedience is something glorious in itself according to what Fr. McNabb says:—

Man's obedience to the authority of his fellow-men is something more than a necessary moral act. To obey the lawful commands of lawful authority amongst men is the highest moral act of man.

It is nothing of the kind. No human progress would be possible if all men regarded obedience thus. English juries ceased to convict offenders who would have been hanged for petty larcenies; the law was altered because juries disobeyed the law. Burning old women as witches was a law which humane men disobeyed; the ghastly law was not altered till many years after the last witch was burnt. Many Roman Catholics to-day would deny that any law which they dislike is the "lawful command of lawful authority." Father McNabb is a very exceptional Catholic if he admits that the Spanish, Russian and Abyssinian "lawful authority" has always had to be obeyed as "the highest moral act."



Nor are we enthusiastic about Father McNabb's assurance that every baby—or at any rate every legitimately born baby:—

long before its lips are capable of saying the words "obedience" or "parent," . . . knows instinctively that its parents are to be obeyed. Yet it knows as instinctively if as inarticulately, that its parents are to be loved—obeyed as no others are to be obeyed and loved as no others are to be loved.

A glance at the reports of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children should modify this sweeping indiscriminate claim. Love of parents deserving of love may also be consistent with a wise disobedience of them.

Looking at the state of Europe to-day, only a rash authoritarian could counsel mankind that unswerving obedience is the first lesson we need at present. Rationalism, wisdom, tolerance, added to widespread knowledge, are urgently needed if mankind is to escape the threatening doom of civilization and liberty.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

## "The Way of all Flesh"

### II.

NEARLY all Samuel Butler's works seemed to appeal to but a limited audience. It may appear incredible, yet with the exception of *Erewhon Revisited*, he had to pay the publisher to have his books put on the market; and then made very little money out of them, even if he was not actually out of pocket. It was the success of *The Way of All Flesh* which called attention to him, and which resulted in a Butler vogue. Incidentally, one of the men who was and is greatly influenced by him is Mr. Bernard Shaw. And to prove how much Butler's sympathy was on the side of Freethought, it is to be noted that he wrote more than one article for Holyoake's old *Reasoner*, in 1865.

Butler had already shown his antipathy to the Church in his satire in *Erewhon* and *Erewhon Revisited*, but he was by no means an Atheist as far as I am able to judge; though he probably had as great a disgust of, and an indifference to, organized religion as any reader of this journal. He had unique opportunities to see it in practice; and one senses his antagonism to it almost from the first pages of *The Way of All Flesh*. Indeed, I know of no work of fiction in which the reasons for loathing Victorian religion are so clearly shown. Butler obviously hated his father, and he spares no pains to show how contemptible is the Rev. Theobald Pontifex, due perhaps more than anything else to his training as a parson, and the kind of parson that the early nineteenth century produced. All the religious cant of the day is gathered in that one dreadful figure, the preposterous father, the more than preposterous parson, full of his own pretentious importance, with Christian humbug and Puritan morality oozing from him. Butler must have taken infernal delight in dwelling upon the most hateful characteristics of the Rev. Theobald, and maliciously exposing them for the benefit of succeeding generations. It was not an isolated case either; Mr. Pontifex must have had his doubles in thousands of Christian homes—not necessarily clergymen, but those kinds of masters of the house of whom another example can be seen in the father of Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

"I think," said Butler, "the Church Catechism has a good deal to do with the unhappy relations which commonly even now exist between parents and children. . . . The general impression it leaves upon the mind of the young is that their wickedness at birth was but very imperfectly wiped out at bap-

tism, and that the mere fact of being young at all has something with it that savours more or less distinctly of the nature of sin."

Butler shows how Theobald had to give way to his father's imperious resolution that he should join the ministry; and Theobald is eventually ordained. "In those days," comments Butler, "people believed with a simple downrightness which I do not observe among educated men and women now. It had never as much as crossed Theobald's mind to doubt the literal accuracy of any syllable in the Bible. He had never seen any book in which this was disputed, nor met with anyone who doubted it. True, there was just a little scare about geology. . . ." A good many people these days who have no doubts whatever about the inerrancy of the Bible prefer to act as if they believed as Theobald did; and if very hard pressed, will insist that if the Bible is not all absolutely God's Word, it at least *contains* God's Word—though exactly where they are seldom prepared to say.

Theobald eventually marries, and Butler's picture of the lady—based almost entirely on that of his own mother—is a delicious portrait of the typical parson's wife of the day. And the description of the kind of life the children, when they came, had to submit to, is one which can never be entirely forgotten by those of us who were lucky to be born in an age when the boosted Christian home life of good Victoria's reign was a thing of the past. And it was not always the children who suffered in this way. Parsons then as now had to visit their parishioners and help the sinners in the name of the Lord. One old lady whom Theobald visited could do without Heaven, but was very anxious to be assured that there was no such place really as Hell. "Mrs. Thompson," replied Theobald, "let me implore you to suffer no doubt concerning these two corner-stones of our religion to cross your mind at a moment like the present. If there is one thing more certain than another, it is that we shall all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, and that the wicked will be consumed in a lake of everlasting fire. Doubt this, Mrs. Thompson, and you are lost."

I would like to dwell much longer than space permits on the various chapters dealing with the boyhood of Theobald's son, Ernest, with his youth, and training for the ministry at college—all described with a wealth of relevant detail, with humour, and that quiet satire for which Butler is so famous. Ernest was extremely badly treated, judging from modern standards, his father literally believing in the Biblical injunction that to spare the rod was to spoil the child. As an example, when the poor little boy was unable to understand what was required from him:—

"Very well, Ernest," said his father, catching him angrily by the shoulder. "I have done my best to save you, but if you will have it so, you will," and he lugged the little wretch, crying by anticipation, out of the room. A few minutes more and we could hear screams coming from the dining-room, across the hall which separated the drawing-room from the dining-room, and knew that poor Ernest was being beaten.

Ernest eventually is ordained and decides to live among the poor in order to bear his Cross manfully. Here again Butler is at his best. His description of the common lodging-house, where Ernest eventually finds himself, in Drury Lane, is written with quiet restraint, but is extraordinarily vivid. There is nothing melodramatic; his portraiture is true to life. And it is here that tragedy comes to Ernest.

He was foolish enough to "insult" one of the young women, who also lived in the house—in a for-



getful moment he tried to emulate one of his friends who called on the other, a prostitute. The result was that

a scared insulted girl, flushed and trembling, was seen hurrying from Mrs. Jupp's house as fast as her agitated state would let her, and in another ten minutes two policemen were seen also coming from Mrs. Jupp's, between whom there shambled rather than walked our unhappy friend Ernest, with staring eyes, ghastly pale, and with despair branded upon every line of his face.

In the sequel Ernest got six months "hard"—a ferocious sentence. Nobody seemed to think it was a savage sentence either. Certainly Butler thought it was quite a reasonable punishment as he makes the magistrate say that he would, in consideration of this being a first offence, deal leniently with the "criminal." But it was a typical Victorian way of sentencing men, and women and children too, without pity or mercy. Nowadays Ernest would have got away with a fine at the most; then, the only way in which misdemeanours of almost any kind were punished was to inflict a maximum sentence if possible. And prisons were prisons in those days. It is difficult to exaggerate the foul cruelty of the whole system and of those in charge.

Prison gave Ernest something to think about. He was not now quite so sure about the "saving grace" of Christ. In his encounters with some of the people he had tried to convert he had by no means come off best. He met a tinker, one day, taking with him Whatley's *Historic Doubts* and Paley's *Evidences*, and found this more or less "uneducated" person knew both books—particularly the former. And the net result of the verbal encounter was the tinker's exposure of Ernest's vast ignorance, even on such a subject as the Resurrection of Jesus as told in St. John. "I am an old man and you are a young one," said the tinker, "so perhaps you'll not mind my giving you a piece of advice . . . you've been real bad brought up, and I don't think you have ever had so much as a chance yet. You know nothing of our side of the question. . . ." Ernest recognized the truth of this and retired "abashed."

He gave up the ministry; and the way in which he married and went into business, and his subsequent relations with his father and mother are finely told. He realized how little Christianity helped him:—

He knew he had been humbugged, and he knew also that the greater part of the ills which had afflicted him were due, indirectly, in chief measure to the influence of Christian teaching . . . hundreds and thousands of young people throughout England were being blighted through the lies told them by people whose business it was to know better. . . .

Ernest became a writer and was, through a legacy, eventually relieved from the task of earning his living. It is not surprising to find that his first essays were semi-theological and semi-sociological—like Butler's own.

I have called attention to *The Way of All Flesh*, because it is one of the few works of fiction definitely Freethought in the English language. It is impossible in a short essay to do justice to the very many good things it contains, the chief among them being its life-like character drawing, and its truthful picture of how some of the teachings of Christianity worked out in practice.

H. CUTNER.

The trouble with most folks isn't so much their ignorance, as knowin' so many things that ain't so.

Josh Billings.

## Sunday School (1871—1881)

"HEAVEN lies about us in our infancy." The truth I wish to emphasize in this Wordsworthian line, needless to say, would have been scornfully repudiated by its author. He lacked, unfortunately, sufficient humour to do otherwise.

Auto-biography, in the opinion of many, should be mental only. Sterne, satirically, makes his biography of Tristram Shandy (which was really Sterne's own auto-biography) begin when he was begotten.

And people were in the habit, at Love-feasts, of getting up and relating as much of their past wholesome lives as would illuminate with a comparative glory their present questionable respectability. Many modern Autobiographies have reminded me of this and similar experiences at Love-feasts.

Much nonsense was talked about our early days. Heaven, and everybody else, seem to have conspired to betray us.

In the opinion of our Mothers we were guiltless, unfallen, pure, unstained, dear little innocent things made in the image of God. But, according to our Sunday-school teacher, an old Calvinistic Elder, we were shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin by our Mothers; and as we grew in stature our knowledge increased, under his careful tuition, until our bundle of sins known, and unknown, was much larger than that of John Bunyan. I marvel, on looking back, at our lack of original sin—rebellion—we took all so quietly. It was not that any of us desired to become a child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven; far from it. On the mountain side, rabbits could be seen from our study windows, and the singing of birds could be heard where we sat; the appearance of such things did anything but help to make attractive the theology provided for our consumption.

Beyond the task of learning by heart *The Shorter Catechism*, and a few other things, only three of the lessons given in our school years, by the old elder, for our edification and instruction in righteousness, imprinted themselves so on my memory as to have nearly consumed me with laughter for well over sixty years.

Lesson 1: Zeph. ii., in relating the destruction of Nineveh, tells of how, in verse xiv., "Both the cormorant and the bittern shall lodge in the upper lintels of it; their voice shall sing in the windows." What a fine duet they must have made! But the revised version improves the translation: "The Pelican and the Porcupine shall lodge in the chapters thereof; their voice shall sing in the windows!" What a tuneful quartet they would have made for the B.B.C.—"Cormorant and bittern" and "Pelican and Porcupine."

Lesson 2: Ezekiel x. tells of peculiar "wheels." In verse 11 we are told "when they went, they went upon their four sides they turned not as they went," and after further interesting comment on these four-sided wheels, which turned not as they went, verse 15 does not surprise us:—

As for the wheels, it was cried unto them in my hearing, O wheel.

Lesson 3 was really a series of lessons on "The Book of Revelations." From this lesson we learned that the Isle of Patmos was full of noises—voices, and thunder and lightning and earthquakes and hail, a weird, uncanny place fitted to distract the brain of a stronger man than the Gentle Apostle John.

Whether the beast numbered six hundred and three score and six was the leading one or not; or what was



## Talking Down to People

THE inanity and vapidness of most of the popular weekly journals—and their advertisements—do not encourage one to think highly of the average intelligence of their readers. It is sometimes said of public speakers that they talk over the heads of their hearers. But most speakers and editors of popular journals (who know better) are quite content to place themselves on the level of their less intelligent hearers and readers—and to *talk down* to them. It cannot be questioned that such speakers and editors, in doing so, entertain an amused contempt for their listeners, while they ought really to have a greater degree of contempt for their own hypocritical pandering to the tastes of the unthinking and the illiterate. But, of course, "one man's money is as good as another's"; and there is a fierce competition to catch the nimble pennies or tuppences of the many-headed.

These mortal enemies of new ideas are suitably allied with the clerics, whose interest it is to induce people to reject all knowledge which may be inimical to the superstitions by which they gain their livelihood. Thus we find in several popular weeklies sermons and articles by clergymen which flatter the simpletons, and affect to depreciate learning which excludes any reliance upon supernaturalism. Man, these professional guides assure us, must worship something. No Freethinker will deny that it may be all to the good for human beings to reverence some fellowman who is giving his great talents for the benefit of Humanity instead of for himself. Such a man may be set up as an exemplar to be imitated. But no Freethinker is prepared to worship in these cases. Nor is he ready to pay tribute or reverence to any supposititious supernatural dictator of the contents of the "Sacred Books" of any religion. The independent thinker, contemplating the historical evidences of Divine futility and failure, is quite justifiably "fed up" with the idea of God as the benefactor of Humanity.

The foregoing comments are prompted by a reply given by the editor of *Tit Bits* to a correspondent who wrote: "I am a young man. All my existence seems to have been bound up with thoughts of the last war and anxieties about the next war. Politics have brought us to this sorry pass, and, so far as I can see, religion hasn't been very helpful. Like many others of my age, I would like to believe that there is still a way out of our troubles, as religious leaders suggest, through the growth of a practical belief in God by the majority of men and women. But don't they expect too much? Even the churches are empty nowadays."

The sapient editor, in his reply, asks irrelevantly, "Why blame God for all that?" And he goes on to argue that people, failing to find a cure in a certain doctor's bottles, are not justified in denouncing all medical science, and the healing powers it offers to us. Oh, most wise editor, we have met and shaken hands with clever doctors; but who has ever shaken hands with God? True, we know that primitive races have witch-doctors and medicine-men in whom sufferers have reposed confidence for their cures; but if the destructive germ has secured a key position in the human organism, it simply laughs at the Joss, Ju-Ju, or modern God, represented by the witch-doctors and medicine-men! Oh, ye of such great faith! This worthy editor says there is only one choice for us—between good and evil. He assumes evidently that some will deliberately choose what they know to be evil! Is that assumption true? We do not accept it as true in the case of the normal human individual! Self-contradiction is evidence of

the relationship of the various four beasts mentioned; or if they were but one four in many disguises; I'm afraid I never learned. Of the four beasts and the four and twenty Elders we could make nothing. We could not imagine our bald-headed teacher making a valuable addition to his four and twenty brethren.

The mention of a second four (full of eyes before and behind) puzzled us yet more because after an exhaustive inspection of the animals in the farmyard we couldn't find any with eyes behind, even after being instructed where to look for them by the village blacksmith, so we concluded this four must have been "heavenly animals."

And another four, the first of which was like a lion, the second like unto a calf, the third like unto a man, and the fourth like a flying eagle. The last four had six wings and "they were full of eyes within, and they rest not day nor night saying Holy Holy Holy Lord God Almighty. Heaven must have an "unparalleled show," for I suppose all its curiosities to be extant.

Then of another beast, the elder told us, which rose out of the sea. This was rather a distinguished beast having seven heads and ten horns, and upon the horns ten crowns, and upon the heads the name of blasphemy. About this beast we heard more than enough, but, like so much more, we heard as though we heard it not.

Then there were the white horse and the four horses of the Apocalypse. We knew them all, we saw them daily. We made no great objection to any of them.

But why dragon, beast, and false prophet should vomit three unclean spirits like frogs, we were told was an unpleasant subject to dwell upon.

Of the "Lion of the Tribe of Judah" where stood a lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes. A whole Sunday was devoted to him. But what all the talk was about I have no recollection. The likeness of the black snails' eyes in the end of his horns captivated me. It seemed to me that the lamb had a greater resemblance to the snail than it had to the lion.

Many other things, all seemingly the properties of an Arabian Night's entertainment, we were told of "to make our calling and election sure"—unclean and hateful birds, white stones, serpents, etc., and of the four angels standing on the four corners of the earth holding the four winds. I liked them, but best of all, the Mighty Angel that came down with a little book open in his hand, who planted his right foot on the sea and his left on the earth, and kept on doing extraordinary things until he gave the little book to the Saint in consideration that he ate it, which he devoutly did. Similar beasts to those of this Sunday Lesson that could be found on our farm had an air of reality about them. Four big pigs with ears like umbrellas, featured four of the beasts. The like horses were visible. But the others having a superfluity of eyes, horns and heads, we could not find. The old elder teaching us represented his four and twenty brethren.

Of the mighty angel with the little book we wouldn't have minded if he had been eaten, but the destruction of the little book seemed wicked.

Thinking and making notes, while reading a poor autobiography, which contained much unimpressive detail, so different to the three impressions (given above) I was tempted to write them down. And, having done so, I hope, they may have more than a passing interest for many readers.

GEORGE WALLACE.



incapacity to argue and this editor has laid it down: "There is in all of us an inherent belief in good."

And he falls back for support upon H. G. Wells. Alas and alack, what a prop is here! How the public are gammoned! Does the Editor not know that the writings of Mr. Wells, which he considers would be helpful, belong to the period of Mr. Wells' life when he indulged in what he calls "provisional" thinking, and that he has publicly expressed his regret for having written them and misled thereby many excellent people?

The editor of *Tit Bits* counters his correspondent's statement that the churches generally are empty by the bare allegation that they are becoming fuller and fuller. Does the editor actually believe this? He declares that it is when a preacher speaks theology instead of speaking God that religious indifference begins to be found. But surely theology means Godism or the science of God. That is, theology simply is the knowledge of God. And how can we know what is unknown or unknowable?

A good many years since a popular thriller called *When it was Dark*, recommended by the Bishop of London and written by Ranger Gull, had a considerable vogue. Its theme was the widespread hopelessness caused by the discovery of a scientist that Christ's ascension into heaven was a fake. But the hopelessness existed only in the heated and diseased imagination of the author who wrote in order to sell. And are not conditions in Palestine to-day providing disproofs of the divinity of Christ? And if he was not God—very God of very God—his "unique" mission counts for nothing.

How these parsons abuse, misuse and distort the term "truth." Truth—the greatest search by the greatest thing we know—the human mind—has no limitations—recognizes no frontiers or boundaries. The editor of *Tit Bits* says he has (like "Ranger Gull") tried to picture the world completely devoid of that "Invisible Power," and he says it is a "terrifying vision." Happily, there is no demonstrable proof of the existence of this "Invisible Power." If there were, what sane human mind could acknowledge its beneficence? It is bad enough to ascribe the "terrifying visions" which we had in the course of the Great War to the greed and folly of tyrannical human beings! It is worse that tyrants who engineer wars should put the responsibility for them upon the alleged Perfect Being they profess to worship.

IGNOTUS.

## Correspondence

### THE ANTI-JACOBIN

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—Mr. Chapman Cohen has, in his interesting Preface to the *Age of Reason*, omitted mention of that clever and humorous work, *The Poetry of the Anti-Jacobin*, wherein Canning so bedevilled Thomas Paine and his Republican associates. The "Poetry" is well worth reading for its brilliant satire and wit. The parody of the German drama of the time is one of the best skits ever written, and the "Needy knife-grinder" is a classic.

EDGAR SYERS.

Youth is the age of beginnings, old age of conclusions. Youth is dreaming of what is to be done, old age rests upon what has already been accomplished. But conclusions that do not pave the way for beginnings frustrate their main purpose, and become obstacles to new and better beginnings.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

### LONDON

#### INDOOR

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Highbury Corner): 8.0, Saturday, Mr. L. Ebury. White Stone Pond, Hampstead, 11.30. Sunday, Miss E. Millard. South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Monday, Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.30, Sunday, Messrs. Bryant, Barnes, Tuson and Miss E. Millard, M.A.

#### OUTDOOR

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES BRANCH N.S.S. (Clarence Hall, Club, next "Fighting Cocks"): 7.30, Mr. A. Burall—"Education and Politics."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH (Alexandra Hotel, South Side, Clapham Common, S.W.4): 7.30, Mr. A. Flanders (Militant Socialist International)—"Freethought and Socialism To-day."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, S. K. Ratcliffe—"Some Impressions of Central Europe."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, Alick West—"The Crisis in Christianity."

### COUNTRY

#### OUTDOOR

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Stevenson Square): 3.0, Mr. W. A. Atkinson.

NEWCASTLE (Bigg Market): 7.45, Friday, Debate—"Is Christianity True?" Affir.: Mr. Norman Charlton, N.S.S. Neg.: Mr. E. J. Hilden. Bigg Market, 7.45, Sunday, Mr. N. Charlton—A Lecture.

#### INDOOR.

BEDLINGTON (Co-operative Hall): 7.15, Thursday, A Debate—"Is there a God?" Affir.: Mr. W. Hogg. Neg.: Mr. J. T. Brighton.

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane): 7.0, J. T. Beilby (Manchester; The Anti-Vivisection Society)—"Superstition and Vivisection."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Bristol Street Schools): 7.0, "Defence of Madrid." Film and address.

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Laycock's Forum, Albion Court, Kirkgate): 7.15, Mr. J. P. Harvey—"Evolution and World Crisis."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Chapman Cohen—"Are We Civilized?" Admission free. Donation tickets.

GREENOCK BRANCH N.S.S. (Shepherds' Hall, Regent Street): 7.0, Mr. G. Whitehead—"Spiritualism Explained."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. L. Ebury—"Belief in God, Man's Folly and Curse."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Islington, Liverpool, entrance in Christian Street): 7.0, G. H. Taylor (Stockport)—"1066 and all that—1937 and all this."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. ("King's Cafe," Oxford Road): Mr. P. B. Monks (Manchester)—"God Save the King." Teas can be provided for those coming from a distance.

NEWBIGIN-BY-SEA (The Modern School): 7.30, Tuesday, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"Gods and Men."

SEGHILL (if wet Miners' Hall): 10.30, Sunday, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"An Atheist and the Bible."

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N.S.S. (General and Municipal Workers' Offices): 7.30, Mr. N. Charlton—"The Case Against the Sunday School."

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Green Street): 7.30, Mr. G. Green (London)—"China at Bay."

MODERN CULTURE INSTITUTE—Friday, October 29, Dr. Har Dayal on "Superstitions, Old and New," Caxton Hall, at 8.15 p.m.



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