

THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED by CHAPMAN COHEN •

— Founded 1881 —

VOL. LVII.—No. 45

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 1937

PRICE THREEPENCE

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Views and Opinions

Mythology and History

IN the *Freethinker* for October 24, we criticized a statement by Mr. Laurence Housman concerning the behaviour of the early Christians and the nature of the teaching of the early Church. We said then, and we repeat now, that we have a very high opinion of Mr. Housman's ability and courage, and was therefore the more surprised that he should have given credence to a mere superstition created by the modern Christian Church. There are many "advanced" thinkers of whom one could not truthfully say regarding their ability and their courage, what we have just said about Mr. Housman. Either their want of courage impels them to make concessions that are not justifiable, or their lack of mental clarity results in either an overstatement of their own case or an undervaluing of that of their opponents. Of both classes it may be said in the words of one of our favourite authors, old Sir Thomas Browne, "it is not given to all worthily to champion truth."

Mr. Housman claimed that Christianity conquered the Roman Empire by its policy of non-resistance. We said of that, and again repeat, there is no historical evidence of any such thing. Neither in early or in later days was tolerance and non-resistance a characteristic of Christians or of the Christian Church. Mr. Housman was merely repeating a Christian legend, and all the known facts are against his statement being true. It is historically untrue and inherently unbelievable. The claim of the Church was that it owed its conquest entirely to supernatural aid. Mr. Housman now sends us a letter, which is here published in its entirety:—

The extract which you give from the *Sunday Chronicle*, on the first page of your issue of the *Freethinker* of October 24, is not a quotation, but a very inexact report of what I have said about primitive Christianity. I hold no brief for the tolerance of the early Christian Church, but there is abundant evidence that in the first two centuries, Christians

were not allowed to undertake military service, though, later on, a concession was made allowing those who were already soldiers to become Christians.

As my only contention in favour of early Christianity was that it was able to survive persecution by a policy of non-resistance, accompanied by the refusal of military service, the rest of your comments do not affect my argument. I may say, however, that I regard the injunction of Jesus, "Do unto others as you would they should do unto you," as the best ethical teaching that has ever been given to the world; and I stress this whenever I speak to those sham Christian audiences who (reverting to the Mosaic law of retaliation) believe in returning evil for evil.

I cannot see any reason why rejection of superstitious beliefs about the person of Jesus should make one belittle his ethical teaching, which was anticipated and shared by as wise a man as Socrates.

I am not surprised at Mr. Housman saying that the citation made from a newspaper was an "inexact" report of what he said. The newspaper policy of publishing only such things as will tickle the palate of their most unintelligent readers, and then refusing to make corrections, is well known. But in this case we do not see, from Mr. Housman's own statement, that the *Sunday Chronicle* was guilty of any substantial misrepresentation. Mr. Housman merely repeats his statement and adds to it that there is abundant evidence that in the first two centuries Christians were not allowed to undertake military service, although later on a "concession" was made allowing those who were already soldiers to become Christians. Mr. Housman apparently thinks that this is proof of the practice of non-resistance in the early Church. It is nothing of the kind. The prohibition of Christians becoming soldiers had nothing to do with the question of non-resistance. It was due to the simple fact that becoming a soldier involved a recognition of the Roman gods, and at that early date Christians made moral and mental war on pagan deities. There was no "concession" required to permit Roman soldiers becoming Christians, because that question was never raised from either the pagan or the Christian side. From the earliest date Christians boasted of the soldiers who had been converted. The prohibition by the Church of soldiers becoming Christians never, therefore, arose. The Christians were anxious to gain converts from the army, and to the Roman Government one god more or less made no difference. I know of no reference which would lead us to believe that Christians did not become soldiers because soldiering was against their religion. And when the Church achieved power by association with the State, the objection to military service applied only to those who took religious vows, such as priests, monks, etc., a prohibition that existed also with the pagan religions. From the first the Christian Church raised no objection to military service, as such. Very early

in the history of the connexion of the Church with the State, one can note the beginnings of religious military orders, and such things as fighting bishops were, later, not at all uncommon. What the Church did was to moralize militarism. It has never cast its authority against it.

* * *

Christian Duplicity

I do not wish to enter into a controversy concerning the ethical value of "Do unto others as you would they should do unto you." That is quite beside the real issue. Mr. Housman admits that the teaching is not Christian (as a matter of fact, it was very widespread) and, therefore, no argument in favour of Christianity can be drawn from it, and while, other things equal, there would be no harm in attributing the teaching to so mythical a figure as Jesus Christ, as other things are not equal, so tendentious a statement cannot be permitted to pass unchallenged. Mr. Housman does not believe in the Christian religion, but he does champion, apparently, the Christian ethic, or, at least, a part of it. And that is where the issue arises. For to-day the commendation of Christianity as a religion is taking a back place. First place is being given to the Christian ethic, which, whether good or bad, is not Christian in origin. As a result, people are invited to believe in the Christian mythology because of the assumed value of Christian moral teaching. They are asked to believe in the divinity of Jesus, and in the "sacred" character of the Church, because Christianity has, as all religions have, some kind of ethical teaching mixed up with its superstitions. I think Mr. Housman will see the gross dishonesty of this procedure. It is a form of the confidence trick, or of obtaining credit under false pretences. The law bars an undischarged bankrupt obtaining credit without making his bankruptcy known. The Church to-day, bankrupt, so far as the historic meaning of its essential doctrines are concerned, seeks to obtain credit by concealing its real position in the modern intellectual world. If Mr. Housman believes in the high quality of "Do unto others as you would others should do unto you," and if he also believes that the doctrines of the Christian religion are so many superstitions, is there any need for him to assist the fraud the Churches are perpetrating by associating its ethical teaching with Jesus Christ? Or, better still, why associate it with any man at all? A sound ethic should stand on its own commendation. Truth, justice, kindness do not need for their acceptance a certificate from well-known men. One might well leave that kind of advocacy to the manufacturers of shaving soap. When Mr. Housman asks why should we belittle the ethical teaching of Jesus because of the superstitions attaching to his religion, the answer is simple. First, we do not belittle the teaching, we only protest against its illegitimate use. Second, because these teachings do not belong to Jesus; and, third, because the attachment of these teachings to what Mr. Housman believes to a mythology is helping to keep alive a superstition in which he has no belief at all. So far Mr. Housman is helping to perpetuate, in the name of morality, a very dangerous form of moral and intellectual deceit. Why mix ethical counsel with dubious history and primitive superstitions?

Finally, the early Christian Church did *not* survive because of its practice of non-resistance. Neither did it grow because people saw in whatever ethical teaching it had, something that was rich and rare. I defy Mr. Housman, or anyone else, to name any Christian leader, who in the early centuries put forward claims in this respect. The Christian Church grew as other religions have grown, but with the ad-

vantage of living under an Imperial Government that admitted the right of men and women to believe in as many gods as they pleased, so long as nothing was done to affront the national deities. Naturally, as with other religions, Christianity did not *begin* by imposing its beliefs upon others by force. Systems and individuals must wait for that until they have acquired power. But so soon as the Christian Church could use force it did so persistently and as cruelly as any Church has ever done. Christianity naturalized persecution in Europe, and if it were possible to indict the Church before some competent tribunal, I should be content to take persecution and its ethical and social reactions as proving the most damning of any evil influence that has affected the world during the past two thousand years.

* * *

The Appeal to Facts

The facts that I should like Mr. Housman to note are, first, the only ground anyone has for asserting that the Christian Church conquered by a policy of non-resistance is the claim of Church itself. And that claim belongs to the more recent years. The original claim of the Church was that it conquered by purely supernatural means, not by its ethical strength. It was only when this plea lost its force that the one of Christianity's ethical value was put forth.

Second, there is the plain fact that the impression produced upon Pagan observers was not the ethical greatness of the Christians, but that of their quarrelsomeness. "How Christians love one another," was a sarcastic comment upon the character of Christians that very early made its appearance in the Pagan world. At no time in history has ethical greatness been the general characteristic of Christians.

Third, the Christian religion became allied with the State in the fourth century. What is its reputation up till then, as stated, not by enemies, but by orthodox Christian ecclesiastical historians? I could fill columns with testimony on this head, and all running the one way. I will satisfy myself with one author, Mosheim. Speaking of the second century he says that many learned men consider the Christian writers as "the very worst of moral instructors." Of the third century he says that Church rule (not State Church rule), "was followed by a train of vices which dishonoured the character and authority of those to whom the administration of the Church was committed. The example of the Bishops was ambitiously imitated by the presbyters, who neglected the sacred duties of their station, and abandoned themselves to the indolence and luxury of an effeminate and luxurious life." With the fourth century we enter upon the period of an alliance between Church and State—not of a State Church, that calamity came in with Protestantism. But of this century Mosheim writes that "the examples of piety and virtue became extremely rare." The same story continues through the succeeding centuries. We should really be greatly obliged if someone would, instead of repeating a lot of sentimental nonsense concerning the purifying effect on the world of Christian ethical teaching, give us a date and a place at which this consequence existed. Why non-Christians should accept these stories, told by Christians, is a little difficult to explain—or is it?

It is, of course, easy to pick out at any time individual examples of ethical greatness. That is true of all times and of all peoples. These are examples of fundamental human qualities that no system, however bad in itself, has been able altogether to suppress. But taken as a whole human virtues fared ill under Christian domination. On Mr. Housman's chosen ground, Christianity made persecution a

naturalized fact in Europe. It brought the conception of the family to as low a level as was possible. Its untruthfulness is recognized by almost every historian of repute. The slanderous nature of its attacks on opponents in all ages is also notorious. It has forged and lied and cheated and robbed, all in the name of God and for the glory of the Church. And one is left wondering why men with the standing of Mr. Housman should endorse the pitiable lie that the Church conquered in virtue of its humility and ethical greatness. Thoroughgoing Freethinkers would look at this phenomenon with amazement if it were not so common; but Christians naturally use these defenders of the faith to bolster up their own unwarrantable claims.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Bible and Bunk

"The world must be conquered, but not by force of arms, but by ideas that liberate."—*Emile Zola*.

"The only absolute good is the progress towards perfection."—*Matthew Arnold*.

THE publication of an entirely new edition of the Christian Bible, rearranged, castrated, and omitting the verse sub-divisions, has evoked considerable comment from the newspaper press. Echoing the dulcet notes of their "pastors and masters," most of the journalists have joined in a "Hallelujah chorus." Others, more daring, have tried to discuss the literary value of the sacred volume. A few have not only proclaimed this particular Bible as great literature, but have boldly claimed it as being the very greatest piece of literature in the world. Which, as old Euclid puts it, "is absurd."

Maybe the principal offender in this respect is Mr. James Agate, a critic who is old enough to know better. Writing in the *Daily Express* (London) October 18, his pen oozes extreme unctiousness. He opens his article in an irritating manner, which, probably, he considers smart and up-to-date:—

Bible readers may be divided into three classes. Those who do not read the Bible at all. Those who read the Bible only in church, or on Sundays, under stress of emotion, or as a daily devotion. Those who read the Bible as they would any other book.

In a later paragraph he explains that "the people who do not read the Bible" include "those who have never read it." It will be seen at once that Mr. Agate likes juggling with language, and is eminently suited for his self-appointed rôle as a defender of the Faith. But, one might ask, where are these phenomena who have never read this particular Bible? Are they travelling gipsies, who constantly evade the schools attendance officers; or are they illiterates who can read nothing? For the Christian Bible is read in the national schools, and education is compulsory. Even journalists should be aware of such things.

Sobriety of statement is not Mr. Agate's strong point. He goes on to say that:—

The Bible, particularly the English Version of it, is the greatest piece of literature in the world. It is better than Æschylus, Homer, Dante. It is better than anything else in the English language.

Now, this sort of thing is to be expected from a young curate, or a Bible Society report, but not from a professional literary critic with a reputation to lose. To write in this manner is to imply that the author knows precious little of Æschylus, Homer, or Dante, to say nothing of Shakespeare, and European litera-

ture. He insults the intelligence of his educated readers by wasting perfectly good ink and paper in this spendthrift and wanton manner.

In the first place, this Christian Bible is not a single book, but a compilation of Oriental poems, tales, proverbs, letters, and genealogies, collected from a variety of sources extending over centuries of time, and latterly bound together. It is not a great and composite work of art, such as Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, in which a master of letters surveys a thousand years of history. Nor has it the metrical skill of *Paradise Lost*, and other poems by Milton. Still less has it any claim to superiority over the great plays of Shakespeare, in which the supreme creative genius of the world's literature displayed his unequalled mastery of language and his unparalleled knowledge of human nature. Compared, not with Shakespeare, but with a lesser poet, such as Swinburne, the Oriental poets of this Bible are poor of resource, limited in range, timid in execution. Even Swinburne has excelled them in ideas and melody, for he was a master in the use of a far wider choice of instruments than these old-world Eastern poets.

Mr. Agate needs to be reminded that this Bible is Eastern in origin, and its affinities are with the *Arabian Nights*, and not with Greek, Roman, and English literature. This Bible has some beauties, doubtless, but it is full of barbarism from cover to cover. Occasional felicities of expression are of doubtful value if they but half-conceal unadulterated savagery. Much of the writing, such as the screams of the prophets, is of pathological interest, although presented in exotic forms of verse. In too many places in the Old Testament the writing is filled with the turmoil of battle, the champing of horses, the flashing and bickering of swords. Only on rare occasions does the voice of humanity make itself heard above the turmoil of battle and massacre. As for the New Testament, the highly evolved moral perceptions of to-day are shocked beyond expression at the awful doctrine that countless millions will suffer eternal punishment.

Humour is the salt of life, and this Bible knows nothing of it. Humour is better than all the prescriptions of the doctors, yet these Orientals have none of it. They pretend to know all about life and death, but they know nothing of the mind of man. I imagine Jack Falstaff among these morbid creatures, and hear him saying: "If Adam fell in a state of innocency, what should Jack Falstaff do in a state of villainy?" Where in all that literature of passion and horror, of morbidity and the death's head, do we find a simple recognition that man is capable of a smile? Humour is not of our time, but of all times. And this Bible knows nothing of it. Men have rioted with frank old Rabelais for centuries; Sancho Panza has made millions smile; Dickens made us all realize the great comedy of life. Through a sense of humour, though a man live in a tub, he can be rich enough. The "Book of Good News" tells us that "Jesus wept," and priests have inferred that the whole human race must cry also.

Mr. Agate may know little of Plato, for he does not mention his name. Let him take down the great philosopher's works from the library shelf and compare his scholarly calm with the hysterics of the old Semitic writers. His claim that the fetish-book is sheer impudence, and he ought to know it. He talks sarcastically of "the language of the park's by-laws." Quite a lot of the sacred volume is couched in stodgier language, yet he will have it that it is the finest of all literary works. Some of it is expressed in language similar to that scrawled on the

walls of park lavatories, and he still makes the same arrogant claim. He is as fanatical as the Caliph Omar, who made precisely the same claim for the Koran, and thought that all other books should be burnt.

"In reading the Bible I am always conscious of great literature," says the sapient Mr. Agate. If he means that the stories of Noah's Ark, Jonah and the Whale, Lot's daughters, the Ten Plagues, and so on, impress him more favourably than Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *The Merchant of Venice* and Goethe's *Faust*, to mention no others, he is but a schoolboy in literature. If he still persists, then all one has to do is to point to the "Thousand and One Nights," where this sort of thing has been done with incomparably more charm than in the pages of "Holy Writ."

It is very doubtful if Mr. Agate really knows any more of the Christian Bible than he has derived from elegant extracts. He writes, not as a critic, but as a Christian Evidence advocate, and he does it very badly. Partisanship can do wonders. The heroine of *Peg O'My Heart* declared that her father "could do anything in the world, except make money." Mr. Agate is just as extravagant and hysterical in his comical claims on behalf of an odd collection of manuscripts, which, had they not been associated with a powerful vested interest, would long ago have been consigned to the limbo of forgotten things.

"In reading the Bible I am always conscious of great literature," purrs Mr. Agate. Prodigious! as Dominic Samson puts it. There is a passage in which the Christian god is made to say: "I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh." Another purple passage runs: "For a fire is kindled in mine anger and shall burn unto the lowest hell." This is the sort of writing that Mr. Agate admires above all other authors, above Goethe, above Seneca, above Plutarch, above Marcus Aurelius. This is a free country, and he is entitled to his opinion. But he must not be too conceited. He shares such views with the savages of the human race, for a large portion of the book he so prayerfully admires has no more to do with real civilization and culture than the gambols of prehistoric monsters in the primeval slime.

MIMNERMUS.

"Christians Awake"

We are always happy to welcome appeals to Christians to wake up after their many centuries of sleep. It is a charitable reading of history to describe as sleep the long story of Christian indifference to mankind's long struggle against tyrants and exploiters. We should like to think that Mr. George Lansbury and Canon "Dick" Sheppard could succeed in interesting Christians in secular "material" reforms.

Canon Sheppard recently used the above heading for an urgent request to the very Christian readers of the *Sunday Express*, to regard as a primary and most important consideration the extreme poverty of a very large number of English families. To place such matters FIRST is to admit the Secularists' long contention. We hope Christians will "awake," but they must then abandon their old slogan about seeking FIRST the "kingdom of God."

Mr. George Lansbury, who has certainly shown preference for principle before place, power and party, has done a fair share of work in drawing attention to existent evils, which we do not believe can

ever be eradicated by those who think religion more important than reason, or that man's spiritual welfare must come before his highest worldly potentialities.

Of course, we do not complain if Mr. Lansbury devotes some pages of his latest manifesto* to arguing with his fellow-Christians, who, by the way, seem remarkably out of sympathy with Lansbury's idea of what Christianity means. As he says:—

My own principles are fairly well known. I am a Pacifist and Socialist because the principles embodied in the life and teaching of the Founder of Christianity appeal to me as those which form the standard of life and conduct which, if followed by even one nation, would ultimately save the world from war and give peace and security at home and abroad.

This, at least, claims that there is not a single nation that has ever attempted to "follow" "the principles embodied in the life and teaching" of Christ. We, on the contrary, believe that mankind has been the victim of these same principles for many centuries; while we differ in our valuation of those principles, we agree with the view which Christians throughout the worst centuries of Christian rule have held, namely, that they were faithful to their Founder or to the traditions which their mythology has associated with his alleged "life and teaching."

We admit that amongst much that is contradictory in that "teaching," the Christian Churches through the ages have always chosen the worst, the vilest, the cruellest readings. If there is anything to say in favour of this choice, one must admit that it is easier (for instance) to sell one's garment and buy a sword (Luke xxii.) than it is to "Resist not evil" (Matt. v. 39). Appeals to "Love your enemies" had to be contrasted with Christ's own abusive epithets against His own enemies, as well as His direful threats of eternal Hell hereafter to all who failed to believe His preposterous legends.

It is all very well for Mr. Lansbury to say he lives in "a pagan society" (p. 13), but he cannot possibly think that the evils he denounces are essentially pagan or atheistic. (Mr. Lansbury, by the way, refers to "pure and simple Agnostics," as if he had never heard the word "Atheist.")

One of Mr. Lansbury's chapters is devoted to "Property and Christianity." Here the author admits that "most leaders of Christendom" (he won't call them Christians, of course), "defend the system" (of money-making under capitalism)" by an appeal to the parable of the Talents." He puts them

the history of the early Church as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles where we are told the followers of Christ held all things in common; or teachings of the Church during the first centuries, that usury is inconsistent with the Christian life.

Possibly Mr. Lansbury is thinking of the number of Jewish money-lenders tortured and killed by Christians who "confiscated" the wealth of their victims. But there is nothing in Christ's teaching to condemn "interest," and however much Mr. Lansbury dislikes this "parable" the entire church of Christ as well as individual Christians have always accepted "interest" on "principle."

As to the community spirit of people in early days—before, during and after Christ's day, it is highly misleading to suggest that these occasional little "brotherhoods" and monastic groups were anything but an expression of the "club" instinct. More-over property-holding may have been insignificant

**Why Pacifists Should be Socialists*, by George Lansbury, Fact, No. Seven; November, 1937, 19 Garrick Street, W.C.2.

amongst Christians until Constantine made the sect fashionable and patronized by the rich. Before that time the fear of persecution, and the confident faith that the end of the world was imminent would make a commonalty of life easy to understand.

The reference to the "Acts" is less conclusive than Mr. Lansbury seems to imagine. Orthodox and Modernist authorities agree with Mr. Hastings' *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, that although isolated Christian bodies may have practised a sectional sort of communion of goods, "this was no essential part of the polity of the primitive church." The story of Ananias does not support Mr. Lansbury. The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was lying, not a breach of any Communistic law. It clearly states that there was no obligation on their part to give anything. As Peter said to Ananias: "While it remained was it not thine own, and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?" (Acts v. 4). By the way, is Mr. Lansbury a Communist—theoretical or practical?

It is very generous of Mr. Lansbury to testify that there are a very large number of men and women who absolutely disagree with the doctrines of the churches, but who, so far as the practice of decent living is concerned, are as good, and in some cases much better, than others who think themselves good Christians,

and he quotes that sturdy Freethinker, Thomas Jefferson's great claim that "the earth is usufruct to the living." Mr. Lansbury is not justified in representing this famous Freethought dictum with a plain Bible text, which becomes, in Mr. Lansbury's inaccurate "paraphrase":—

The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof is used for the service of mankind.

Mr. Lansbury's sneer (on p. 13) at his fellow-Christians, who "rely perhaps on an isolated text from St. James," is only important as showing the hopelessness of appealing to Bible teaching, where secular social amelioration is aimed at. We, as outsiders, should have imagined the Epistle attributed to James would have been preferred by most as at least an attempt to commend good works instead of the anti-social reliance on "Salvation by Faith." James has always had a "bad press" from orthodoxy.

If the teachings of Christ and His followers obtain the revival Mr. Lansbury and a few Christians of his type desire, the new crusade will be financed and supported by hard-headed capitalists—not as propaganda for Socialism and Democracy, but very much the reverse. Money for the propaganda of Christianity is harder to obtain because the "hell fire insurance" idea is exploded. The wealthy will contribute, and are already beginning to contribute to Christian teaching as a "trade protection fund."

Mr. Lansbury's own straightforward honesty is undisputed. But even he belongs to a church which exacts from all candidates for membership a declaration that it is his or her duty (*inter alia*):—

to order myself lowly and reverently before all my betters.

to submit myself to all my governors, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters, and

to do my duty in that state of life into which it shall please God to call me.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

A Barmecide Feast

THIS world the Christians affect to regard with contempt. The attempt of the millions to improve their position as regards food, clothing and shelter, they condemn as *materialism*. "The things of the spirit are the things that matter" saith the preacher. Little indeed in their Gospel about the bitterness of spirit and the stagnation of soul that poverty engenders! Definitely to position their big guns against all the primary appetites of mankind the clergy, however, regard as perilous. These appetites are strong, and, if thwarted persistently, may develop in ugly fashion. Consequently, promises are made that a good time is coming—a perpetual "summer-land"—for those who take the sacraments and bow the knee in the approved tabernacle. True the stomach will be filled at the time when the stomach is non-existent; the clothing and shelter are to be provided when there is no body to be affected by changes in temperature or questions of decency. All the same, a good time is coming, and the opinion is fostered that it is even going to be a good *materialistic* time. For the things of the spirit, it is realized, cut insufficient ice.

These considerations remind one of a story in one of the best books in the world, and when one says this one does not, strangely enough, refer to the Book which contains "the noblest philosophy, the finest language and the most exalting precepts, The Holy Bible." One is thinking of the *Thousand and One Nights*, and the Story is *The Barber's Tale of His Sixth Brother*.

The name of the sixth brother is Shakashik or Many Glamours, the Shorn of both Lips, who was once rich and became poor, and was reduced to the position of beggar. One day he espied a great mansion, and, speaking to the eunuch at the entrance, he was told, "Enter by the great gate and thou shalt get what thou seekest from the Wazir, our Master."

When this personage saw my brother he stood up to him and welcomed him and asked him of his case; whereto he replied that he was in want and needed charity. Hearing these words the grandee showed great concern and putting his hand to his fine robe rent it exclaiming, "What! am I in a city, and thou here art hungered? I have not patience to bear such disgrace!" Then he promised him all manner of good cheer and said, "There is no help but that thou stay with me and eat of my salt." So the Barmecide cried, "Ho boy! bring basin and ewer"; and, turning to my brother, said "Oh, my guest, come forward and wash thy hands." My brother rose to do so, but he saw neither ewer nor basin; yet his host kept washing his hands with invisible soap in imperceptible water and cried, "Bring the table!" But my brother again saw nothing. Then saith the host, "Honour me by eating of this meat and be not ashamed." And he kept moving his hand to and fro as if he ate, and saying to my brother, "I wonder to see thee eating thus sparingly: do not stint thyself for I am sure thou art famished." So my brother began to make as though he were eating whilst his host kept saying to him, "Fall to, and note especially the excellence of this bread and its whiteness." But still my brother saw nothing.

Then came a lengthy meal; course after course, each of the same specific gravity.

"O, my guest, Allah upon thee! hast thou ever seen anything better than this meat pudding? Now, by my life, eat and be not ashamed." Presently, he cried out again, "Ho boy, serve up the marinated stew with the fatted sandgronse in it"; and he said to my brother, "Up and eat, O my guest, for truly thou art hungry and needest food." So my brother began wagging his jaws and made as if champing

No man is the wiser for his learning; it may administer matter to work in, or objects to work upon, but wit and wisdom are born with a man.—*John Selden*.

and chewing, whilst the host continued calling for one dish after another and yet produced nothing save orders to eat.

Now, turn to the Book of Books, Luke vi. 17:—

And he came down with them, and stood in the plain. . . And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said,

Blessed be ye poor: for your's is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled.

Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh.

Blessed are ye when men shall hate you . . . for behold your reward is great in heaven. . . .

Woe unto you that are full for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep.

Thus do our pastors and masters feed us with the very name of food. Thus do they preach, and produce nothing save sermons. The policy has succeeded, from their point of view, up to now. They have prevailed upon many to "champ and chew," and so give the appearance of a hearty enjoyment of the banquet. And that they have succeeded with multitudes by getting them to join in the general "wagging of jaws" goes beyond question. The individual who fails to play the game and says he would prefer to eat a succulent steak and wear unpatched pantaloons, is howled at as a *materialist*. The epithet serves, even when it comes from the lips of those who have easy access to granaries and larders; whose roofs leak not; and whose raiment is sumptuous and delightful to gaze upon.

Our beggar, however, got weary of champing and chewing. He called for wine and drank liberally of the Barmecide vintage. How he added to his histrionic reputation by feigning intoxication and administering the "knock-out" to his host, and how his host, seeing the humour of it, clapped him on the shoulder and then dined stylishly with him as a boon companion, and denied him nothing in the way of real entertainment for the future, is told in the *Thousand and One Nights*. We are content, however, simply to relate this dénouement and not press it unduly into the service of our parable. Still, it gives one to think. We wonder, if those who nowadays have empty bellies acted so ingenuously, whether their Graces of York and Canterbury would see the humour of it.

T. H. ELSTON.

Early Impressions

AFoot, light-hearted and free, we took to the open road—the broad road leading to destruction, according to our parents—when full of the ardour of youth.

The fire of life burned so brightly, so wildly in our eyes, our guardians thought it needed damping. Therefore when "August death" came anywhere near we had to go and view the work he had been doing in his "eternal cell," and touch it lest we should be haunted by it ever after.

This custom of touching the dead I have never been able to trace. Tradition in this case was stronger than Bible teaching. In J. M. Wheeler's *Bible Studies*, the following interesting paragraph appears on p. 59:—

Touching a corpse was taboo among the Greeks, Romans, Hindoos, Parsees, and Phœnicians. If a Jew touched a dead body—even a dead animal (Lev.

ii. 39)—he became unclean, and if he purified not himself—"That soul shall be cut off from Israel." (Num. xix. 13). So those who defiled themselves by touching a dead body are regarded by the Maoris as in a very dangerous state, and are sedulously shunned and isolated. Doubtless it was felt that death was something which could communicate itself, as disease was seen to do.

After, however, touching the body, without upsetting a little saucer containing salt, and reaching the open air I lifted my eyes to the everlasting hills and thought of the brevity, the littleness of human life. Many years after I was amazed to find how eloquently Philip Bourke Marston, in a "Lament" for Oliver Madox Brown, had expressed my thoughts:—

"Oh men and women, listen and be wise,
Refrain from love and friendship, dwell alone,
Having for friends and loves the seas, the skies
And the fair land for these are still your own,
The sun is yours, the moon and stars are yours,
For you the great sea changes and endures,
And every year the Spring returns and lures:
I pray you only love what never dies."

Touching the body did not save me from being haunted though. In the early morning I was awakened by my grandmother. Her religion (Calvinism), aroused by the sight of death, prevented the old woman (over eighty years of age) from sleeping, and she lay weeping and praying. From what I overheard I gathered, from the appeal she made to the Almighty to lift her curse, that she did not think herself one of the elect:—

I know of thy purposes according to election yet I would humbly beseech thee by thy almighty power to save a poor, frail old body like me by making my calling and election sure.

The fountain filled with blood caused us furiously to think. The killing of our pigs and the saving of their blood to make "Bloody Puddings" tempted us to calculate how many pigs would need killing to fill Emmanuel's fountain. "Prodigious!" Dominic Sampson would have said in answer.

We were urged to search the scriptures, but those of us who did, and happened to ask a question that did not admit of an easy answer were called "Young Infidels," and charged with "doubting God's Holy word."

At one lesson we were told of a "wall daubed with untempered mortar" (Ezek. 13). This lesson with its mention of common everyday things was understandable, and the old elder's solemn reading of the 15th verse in conclusion:—

Thus will I accomplish my wrath upon the wall, and upon them that have daubed it with untempered mortar, and will say unto you, the wall is no more, neither they that daubed it.
left no more to be said.

But many of our lessons just finished where something very interesting began. And very often we were all reading the forbidden part, while the part none of us had much interest in was being expounded. So after the story of "the wall daubed with untempered mortar" came a curious description of "soul hunting"—which puzzled Bible students, if memory serves me well, until Frazer, about 1900, threw some light on it by comparing it with similar practices in Africa and elsewhere. Bug-hunting, Butterfly-hunting, or Wren-hunting all came within our ken, but soul-hunting! :—

Ezek. xiii. 18. Thus said the Lord God; woe to the women that sew pillows to all armholes, and make kerchiefs upon the head of every stature to

hunt souls! Will ye hunt the souls of my people, and will ye save the souls alive that come unto you?

19. And will ye pollute me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live, by your lying to my people that hear your lies.

20. Wherefore thus saith the Lord; Behold I am against your pillows, wherewith ye there hunt the souls to make them fly, and I will tear them from your arms, and will let the souls go even the souls that ye hunt to make them fly.

21. Your kerchiefs also will I tear, and deliver my people out of your hand, and they shall be no more in your hand to be hunted; and ye shall know that I am the Lord.

The above interesting passage shows that the Psyche could be detached from the body, and even captured and snared by witchcraft, when thus separated.

In the Epistles of our beloved brother Paul, there are some things hard to be understood, and a deduction may be made that he knew a good deal about soul-hunting. Witchcraft and Black Magic were still living in James I's time, and in Paul's time it was certainly not unknown. Paul believed in the complex nature of the soul—the pneumatic body and the psychic body (1 Cor. xv. 44), and the pneumatic body he looked upon as the life-giving element. Some scholars think that, like the Gnostics, he believed that man was composed of three principles, but why not make it four by adding the body of sin (Rom. vi. 6)? But the detached Psyche gets interesting and Paul I fancy . . . but I get hungry and I must take food for my body however regardless I may be of my soul—“Take no thought for your soul what ye shall eat.” (Luke xii. 22). And this passage is surely significant of much . . . but if I do not eat I shall get a pneumatic stomach, though that would be preferable to having a pneumatic brain like that of the apostle.

GEORGE WALLACE.

Acid Drops

Thanks to an iniquitous state of affairs the Government is ready to contribute seventy-five per cent of the cost of erecting schools that have as their reason for existence the teaching of specific and sectarian Christianity. There is small reason for surprise that the clergy—Roman Catholic and Anglican—have been pressing their supporters to provide the five shillings so as to secure the gift of fifteen shillings. That kind of investment ought to satisfy the most grasping. Even so the clergy are not finding it easy to get the money. Good Christians like everything for nothing, and never yet have they had objection to fleecing non-Christians and the general public in the interests of their creed.

Knowing the mind of the average man, one may safely assume that this talk of percentages passed in many cases without its significance being realized. But the municipal elections have given one illustration that it is dangerous to make the nature of unjust claims clear. In Liverpool, for example, the Roman Church, finding that the local authorities and public feeling lent it no assistance, effected an alliance with the Labour Party in Liverpool. Unwisely the Labour Party fell into the trap. Roman Catholics were ordered to vote Labour, and Labour people were asked, or ordered, to vote for Catholics. The result was that Labour lost eight seats. In the long run, straightforwardness is really the best policy.

The Rev. H. G. Wilks, Vicar of Uppertong, writes the kind of article for the *Daily Mirror*, which Fleet Street will never refuse. He pillories “certain types of

peevish neurotic women who take up ‘religion’ from pretty much the same motive as they take up Bridge.” There is Miss Amelia Snitch, for instance, who is “full of good works and uric acid,” and Miss Twillup, whose only love is for her dog, whose mind is a nasty piece of work, which would make “a nice case for a sanitary inspector,” and who, finally, “deems she serves God best by opposing the Vicar,” which places an effectual seal upon a very bad case. And there is Mrs. Snatcher, and Mrs. A. B. and C., unpleasant cases all, the necks of whom, the *Mirror* assures us, Mr. Wilks would like to wring.

Mr. Wilks has, however, an understandable desire for an easy life, so:—

Fortunately, my parish lies in the virile, practical West Riding, where I have escaped contact with such females. But these pests exist elsewhere, and succeed in making local church or chapel life stink in nostrils of normal intelligent folk.

The types that exist *elsewhere* miss nothing, he tells us, save “true religion.” It is pleasing to think that in the virile, practical West Riding, where the guidance is superior and the religion true, the women still keep alive the fair reputation of their sex. The conclusion is plain. True Religion is safe only in the hands of clerics such as the Rev. H. G. Wilks. With more Wilks we shall have more true religion and the wringing of necks can merrily proceed.

Christians will be delighted to learn that, according to the Bishop in Kobe, the work of converting the Japanese to Christianity is progressing very favourably. “In spite of everything,” says the Bishop, “the work of God’s Kingdom does go forward.” He adds, “Please help us by your prayers to carry on the regular work of shepherding and evangelization, that in the midst of world-shaking events our clergy and workers may be kept calm and steady and keen, and do what we can to help, not only our Christians, but through them the whole country to find their needs and ambitions fulfilled in the one true God, and Jesus Christ, His Son, Our Lord.” The “world-shaking events” are presumably the war waged by the Japanese, not merely against Chinese soldiers, but against helpless women and children; and it would be interesting to know whether the Christian Japanese think about it exactly as do their “pagan” brothers; or whether they are loudly protesting against it in the name of humanity, whatever they do about Christianity. We fancy that “Our Lord,” to a Japanese, even when he is a convert, is much more likely to be his Emperor, and what the Emperor—or those around him—says, will be the only thing that matters, Jesus or no Jesus.

The Annual Report of the Board of Education states that the number of children in Church Schools decreased by 400,000 in the years from 1922 to 1936, and the number of schools by 1,000. This is very good news and shows how slowly but surely State schools are ousting those set up by the Church of England. The Church of Rome, however, has managed to increase its number of schools, though it must be obvious to careful observers that what it gains on the swings, it loses on the roundabouts. The proof of this is, the fulminations hurled against the “slackers” and the “indifferentists” by Roman bishops and priests. In any case, though both Churches are making strenuous efforts to preserve religion in the schools, that is, any schools, it can be said with confidence that in a great majority of cases, religion is taught very half-heartedly, particularly in secondary schools. It may take some time yet, but the ideal of a purely Secular Education in our State Schools will certainly come to pass.

A number of young people came together, the other day, “to make some corporate answer to the Archbishop’s Recall to Religion” as the Chairman, Mr. Winckworth, announced. The meeting was addressed by a number of speakers, among whom was the Bishop

of London, whose principal contribution was a hope to see ten churches built during the next two years, and another £10,000 a year added to the Fund. Dr. Ingram never did have the least difficulty in associating the advancement of religion with cash. On the other hand, Mr. J. T. Christie, the Headmaster of Westminster School, "urged the importance of clearing away certain crude but very common misconceptions with regard to Christianity." He instanced "the popular notion that it conflicts with science and commonsense." Well, doesn't it? Would Mr. Christie have the slightest hope of convincing a representative body of scientists that, for example, the devils and the miracles of Christianity could be substantiated by science to the satisfaction of all reasonable men? Could he make his own boys believe in them on *evidence*—not on faith?

In the course of a graceful lament over the loss and destruction of ancient art and literature, particularly in the case of Greece, Dean Inge asks, "And what did our ancestors think worth preserving . . .?" He cites several comparatively insignificant works after remarking that "There is not much in secular Greek which is not worth reading": and then says: "Do any of my readers own the Fathers of the Church, in folios weighing about two tons? It is amazing how these eminent ecclesiastics, who were active administrators, managed to spoil so much good paper." But he has hope of future "golden ages," apparently, based on the "old theory of cycles." He does not believe "all the past will be dead. There is an eternal order in which all the higher values—including human spirits—are preserved safe." Concluding with the quotation from "his favourite philosopher, Plotinus" (3rd century): "Nothing that really is can ever perish." Dr. Inge adds: "It is a reasonable faith, *if there is a God.*" (Our italics). . . . Our admiration for much of the Dean's writing need not prevent us from pointing out that his career and comfortable retirement came about through his unquestioning acceptance of a God without this "if" in the matter.

Another book on "Our Lord!" This time it is one dealing with the Parables. It is by Dr. T. D. Smith, and the author, according to one critic, holds "the radical view that none of the parables and similitudes, with the doubtful exception of the Two Debtors, has been preserved in its original setting in the Christian tradition." Dr. Smith also holds that the parables have been "modified," by a "tendency to allegorize the material presented," and other "modifications." Needless to say, this proves, according to Dr. Smith, that "there is good reason for maintaining that the great majority of the parables in the Synoptic Gospels are authentic!" If critics are forced to admit that a good deal of the "biography" of Jesus is "imagination," and even the "parables" are *not* as given by Jesus, what is there left? Nothing at all—but it will not do to go as far as that, or the book won't sell. And, after all, some effort must be made to keep people nominally Christian.

The Rev. H. Brooke, a Methodist minister at Southsea, was thrilled when he produced the voice of the late Rev. W. H. Lax, of Poplar, in a talking film for his congregation. "I thought it was time something was done to attract outsiders," said Mr. Brooke, and he thinks "these 'talkie' services will do the trick." *Trick* is certainly the operative word here, but it is shocking to find that congregations are not "attracted" by *divine* service alone.

"Toying with the idea" of a mixed "confirmation" class, the Rev. Cecil Clark, vicar of St. Gabriel's, Wanstead, writes: "This is not to say that I am thinking of running a matrimonial agency." He simply wants boys and girls to grow up "together in the family of the Church, especially in these days when so few young people have any religion at all." With true Christian humility and an eye on empty pews and declining Sunday-schools, Mr. Clark doesn't blame the young 'uns

entirely. No—"It's your trumpety religion and mine for the most part that paganizes youngsters," says he. Well, why not give up his "trumpety religion"?

"Screaming, screeching, sobbing and crying" going on "until midnight," during services at Grace Tabernacle, Woodstock, Ontario, so disturbed the sleep of people living near, that the pastor, E. N. O. Kulbeck was summoned. He pleaded "not guilty" of creating a nuisance, and judgment was reserved. We anticipate a verdict of "not guilty," for some nuisances are privileged.

What an excellent frontispiece Epstein's "Consummation Est" ("It is finished") would have made to the new Bible, if only the publishers had had timely imagination! It is as "shapely" as the most acute minds of Bible worshippers could conceive.

The *Methodist Recorder* reports that "no fewer than 800 new seat-holders have been registered at the City Temple since Mr. Leslie Weatherhead's advent." We do not dispute the figures. Christians move from one church and even from one sect to another. Mr. Weatherhead was a Methodist who has been "called" to a larger church belonging to another denomination—the Congregationalists. As the Steward at the City Temple remarked to the *Methodist Recorder* reporter: "There's a rare lot of Methodists" in the newcomers. It is part of a stage army.

Fifty Years Ago

THE sting of Mr. Spurgeon's complaint is in the tail. He is appalled at the new doctrine, which is spreading so in the churches, of "another probation after death, and a future restitution for the lost." The people we preach to, he exclaims, "must be saved in this life or perish for ever." Certainly no other conclusion is consistent with the words of Jesus Christ. Yet the more ductile Vicars of Bray are resolved to preach the contrary. They mean to tone down Hell into Hades, and cut short its duration; in other words, they intend to set up a Protestant purgatory, only with this difference, that all will finally reach heaven, unless some of them—the incurable rubbish of creation—are quietly extinguished out of existence. These trimmers see quite plainly that people will not stand being damned in the downright, old-fashioned style; and so, as the Rev. Dr. Clifford says—and he is one of them—"the temper in which they think of 'man after death' has wholly changed to one of passionate pity and overflowing tenderness." Cunning dogs! When hectoring is played out they begin wooing; when they can no longer terrorize they cajole. Anything is better than giving up their easy and pleasant way of earning an excellent living.

Any man who sees through their craft will naturally ask, what on earth *their* "passionate pity and overflowing tenderness" has to do with our lot hereafter. Whatever our fate may be in any future life, it is decided by a greater power than theirs. Their sentiments cannot affect our destiny; nor is their personal opinion on what lies "behind the veil" of any greater moment than that of the meanest of their listeners. If the Bible is the fallible word of ancient men, neither is its dictum of any greater authority. If, however, it is the infallible word of God, the only question is, What does it say? What it *does* say is obvious to any one who will read with his own eyes and mind; and if the sky-pilots break away from it—as they assuredly will—they will simply be taking a big stride towards the final rejection of the great Protestant fetish. Religions do not die a sudden death. Like icebergs floating south, they gradually dissolve. Little by little the huge mass of superstition thaws under the sun of science; little by little the brutal legacy of barbarous ages disappears before the higher conscience of civilization.

The Freethinker, November, 6, 1887.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

D. V. WEBB.—We have read your account of the debate you attended with much interest, but regret that it is too lengthy for our space. The priest acted with caution in not defining his terms. For a Christian to be definite when debating with a Freethinker is to invite defeat.

E. A. McDONALD (S.A.).—Good wishes, however late, are welcome visitors. There are powerful elements of reaction at work all over the world, but we agree with you that the prospect is not without hope. We have always said that the struggle would become fiercer as victory came nearer.

G. SPEED.—We are pleased to learn that the Hampstead Labour Party has questioned municipal candidates as to their attitude with regard to opening recreation grounds on Sunday. People who worship a god who bars children amusing themselves on one seventh of their lives have no justification for calling themselves civilized.

H. MAY.—If you cannot learn something from a bad book you are not likely to learn much from a good one. A book with which one disagrees should suggest ideas. And that is a very valuable gift. Whether they suggest agreement or disagreement is a minor matter. The lesson that one gets from a philosopher is not the one that is derived from intercourse with a fool, but both ought to suggest something.

A. D. HOWELL SMITH.—Will appear next week.

C. H. MAIN.—Pleased to hear of the successful meeting held by Mr. Whitehead at Greenock.

A. HANSON (Bingley).—We have, in stock, cards with quotations from Thomas Hardy and Ingersoll suitable for Christmas and New Year's Greetings.

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.

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, 3/0.

Sugar Plums

We have a last opportunity to call the attention of London Freethinkers to the "Social" that is being held by the N.S.S. Executive on Saturday next (November 13), at the Bishopsgate Institute, Bishopsgate Street. Doors will be opened at 6.30. There will be dancing, music and singing, from 7 to 11 o'clock. Refreshments will be provided. Admission will be by ticket, price 2s. 6d. each. We hope that N.S.S. members will bring along their friends. It is often a good way of introducing to our movement those who are not already acquainted with it. Tickets may be obtained from the Freethinker Office.

The Edinburgh case is adjourned until November 30. In this case Mr. George Whitehead, who was holding open-air meetings in Edinburgh, under the auspices of the N.S.S., was summoned under the Shop Hours Act, and a local bye-law for selling pamphlets and books after 8 o'clock. The case, although a simple one at first glance, raises important and wide-reaching issues. The N.S.S. Executive determined to fight the case, and an advocate was engaged to defend. The case came on for

hearing on October 26 in the new Sheriff's Court, Edinburgh. The Police case took so long in offering evidence that there was time to hear only one witness on the other side, Mr. Cohen. Then to suit the convenience of both sides the hearing was adjourned until the date named. We do not care to say more on the matter for the present. But friends may rest assured that the interests of Freethought propaganda, and the larger interests of propaganda in general are being carefully watched.

We are not a specialist on divorce laws, but what looks as though it is a very useful summary of the present position—at least we are not able to find any fault with it—is offered to the public by Mr. Alfred Fellowes (Watts & Co., 1s.). Not the least valuable feature of this little book is that it is really written for the layman and not for the lawyer.

We are asked by our business manager to express his regret that some orders for *The Bible Handbook* have been held up owing to a delay in the binding. The demand for the book has been much greater than was expected, and the first binding order was soon exhausted. By the time this issue of the *Freethinker* is in the hands of readers, all orders will have been discharged. The increased demand for this book—it is now in its eighth edition—may be due to the advertising of the Bible that has been going on. Many may have made up their minds to re-read the Bible. We hope that this is the case. If they really get acquainted with it their religious veneration for it is most likely to weaken very considerably. On the other hand, if they read it as a storehouse of primitive superstitions and uncivilized customs, they will find it a very interesting volume. We have in mind a handbook of a kind different from that of the present one, which would be next to indispensable for all who wished completely to understand the "sacred" volume.

Manchester friends are having an opportunity of hearing Mr. L. Ebury, who will lecture this evening (November 7) for the local N.S.S. Branch in Kings Café, Oxford Road, Manchester, at 7 o'clock, on "Atheism, a Social Necessity." Mr. Ebury is well known in the London area, where he commands appreciative audiences, and we hope that a full house will await him at Manchester.

The Pioneer Press has for sale a limited number of Mr. F. A. Hornibrook's book, *Without Reserve*, originally published by Heinemann, Ltd., at 7s. 6d., which is now being offered at 2s. 6d., postage extra. Mr. Hornibrook has travelled much, and has led a mentally adventurous life. His comments are vivid, to the point, and the reader will not find a dull page in the book.

The *Kentish Independent*, contains an analysis of the Church and Chapel attendances in Erith for the past three years. Eliminating such special occasions as Harvest Festivals and British Legion Assemblies, he finds the average (the names and figures for each Church are given), works out at about 1,000, just three per cent of the population. The average attendances at cinemas during the same period was over 2,000. It may be noted that all sorts of influences are at work to get people into Church and Chapel, while the influences brought to bear on cinema attendants is to keep them out. We are not surprised that the clergy are against cinema opening on Sunday.

We are asked to announce that a debate on "Is There a Future Life?" between Mr. E. E. Phillips, of the National Spiritualist College, and Mr. Paul Goldman, of the Bethnal Green Branch N.S.S., will be held in the Stratford Spiritual Church, Idmiston Road, Forest Lane, Stratford, on Monday, November 8. Admission is free.

The film of *Emile Zola* now showing at the Carlton, Haymarket, is an example of the enormous cultural possibilities of the cinema. The life of this great writer and Freethinker, and his work for Truth and Justice, is depicted with great skill, and the profound impression it leaves is undeniable. The *Dreyfus Case* naturally

bulks large in the story, and the fight that Zola waged on behalf of that pathetic victim is depicted with a faithfulness that (particularly at this time of day), is very helpful to the cause of humanity and civilization. Paul Muni, in the title rôle, gives a fully sympathetic reading of the great Freethinker. The Dreyfus Case is perhaps the world's greatest "Frame Up." How Zola, against colossal odds, fought for this persecuted Jew, with ultimately successful results, forms a story which is so thrilling that many of the audience are under the impression that this film is to some extent a romantic and imaginative effort, instead of being but a page of Yesterday, in the History of Our Own Times. The best fighting traditions of Freethought are exemplified in the life of Zola, and those who perhaps can be excused, just now, for despairing of human progress, should not fail to see this film and so have their energies revived, and their principles justified.

The plot against Dreyfus was engineered by the Church and a military clique. Naturally the Church does not appear in the film, and if it had been brought forward the censor would probably have objected. In that respect the film is true to life. The Church worked in the background then, and it is kept in the background now. As we have often said, the Dreyfus scandal might have occurred anywhere. If it had occurred here, the Government would probably have appointed a committee, and nothing more would have been heard. The French people, with that thoroughness characteristic of French politics, having discovered that the Church was one of the principal figures in the plot, promptly disestablished the Church.

What I Believe

It is customary, in theological circles, not only to indulge in a considerable amount of loose thinking, but also to use words in the most ambiguous manner. Perhaps mysticism of any kind demands indefinite phraseology, being highly indefinite itself.

Before entering on the subject of what a person DOES believe, it may be as well to consider the problem of what he CAN believe—in other words, to define the nature of belief itself. This may lead to some unexpected conclusions; it may also result in some agreement as to the meaning of terms to be used in our enquiry. It is just as well, when two persons use the same word, that they should mean the same thing.

Belief implies an absence of precise knowledge. When one says that he, or she, believes something to exist, or to be true, the implication is that there is no exact information on the subject, otherwise for the "I believe," one would substitute "I know." I think this will be conceded, although it is often forgotten, as we shall see later on.

The next proposition for consideration is that one can only believe in the existence of something that can be represented in thought; of which a mental concept can be formed. It matters not at all how improbable or ridiculous such mental concept may be. Thus, I can believe in the existence of a pink serpent ten miles long; at least, I can form a mental concept of such an animal. The component parts of the mental image are serpent, the colour pink, and the length of ten miles, and all three, considered separately, are within human experience. But, if I ask anyone to believe in the existence of a Houyhnhnm, he, or she, will reply, quite properly, "I do not know what a Houyhnhnm is," which means that one must form a mental picture of anything before any person can believe in it. Yet when I ask the question of the average British person, "Do you believe in God?" I get the reply "Certainly," in the greater number of instances. When, however, I probe a little deeper,

and attempt to get some idea of the believer's mental concept of God, I find this just as hazy as in the case of the Houyhnhnm. For, to have a proper mental concept, however indefinite, one must be able to describe it, in some terms, no matter how imperfect such terms may be. If I am met with the statement, "No mortal can describe God," then I retort that no mortal can form any mental picture of Him, and, therefore, no one can believe in His existence. Another important point is that in referring to God as "Him," we have already attempted some description; we have given the Deity a sex. If no mortal can apprehend the nature of God—and we are told this weekly, and from every pulpit in the land—then how do we know that He is masculine? Why not feminine, or neuter? Why not refer to Him as "It," and be on the safe side? Yet when I carry the enquiry thus far, with the average theologian, I am met with the epithet "Atheist," and then the bonnets are on the green. Yet, if I returned the compliment, and accused the non-believer in my Houyhnhnm of being a "heretic" or an "infidel," I should be accused of being highly unreasonable—and with justice.

I think we can clear the way through this theological fog by stating two propositions:—

(1) When you say that you believe in the existence of something, you acknowledge, by implication, that you are not certain; you do not know.

(2) One cannot believe in the existence of anything without being able to form some mental picture of that something, however hazy, or grotesque, such imagined concept may be; e.g., the ten-mile long pink serpent versus the Houyhnhnm.

Now, if one begins to interrogate the average English clergyman (no easy matter, as you are soon told to believe, but not to enquire—in fact, enquiry, in itself is generally held to be proof positive—theological "proof"—that you are no believer, with all attendant consequences, from utter damnation to social ostracism) he may begin by stating that he "believes" in God, but he will follow that up, very rapidly, by telling you that he knows God exists. That is the clerical manner of clinching the argument. He does not see what is involved in this exchange of belief for knowledge. If one can describe the mental picture which must lie at the base of any genuine belief (genuine, as compared with a pseudo-belief, which is merely believing that one believes) it should be much easier to describe a fact—i.e., God—of whose existence our clergyman is certain; but, if no description be possible, then God's existence cannot be a fact at all. Anything perceived is only perceptible by its attributes, size, shape, colour, location, and the like, and, without attributes, there can be no conception at all. One cannot even imagine anything which has no size, colour, texture, shape nor location, which means that one cannot even believe in an existence shorn of all attributes, much less know.

In spite of the assertion that no mortal can comprehend God—which divines make on all possible occasions—with theological inconsistency they will furnish the Almighty with attributes *ad lib*; will even tell you His habitat. He is All Powerful, All merciful, Omnipresent, etc., etc. The implications attached to these statements are never considered. There is the account of the American preacher—the "Hot Gospeller"—who was in the habit of saying, in fervent periods, "Thou knowest, oh God," and who never noticed the absurdity, that his statement implied an intimate, personal acquaintance with the Deity.

Let us make a few enquiries which, being pertinent, cannot be impertinent.

GOD IS IN HIS HEAVEN. Where is this Heaven situated? If it exist at all, it must be beyond the farthest Galaxies, which are millions of light-years away—at least so astronomers of the rank of Sir James Jeans and Sir Arthur Eddington tell us, and I have no record of any archbishop giving them the lie—and as light travels at about 186,000 miles per sec. (and this is indisputable fact) if God sends his commands to earth with the speed of light, he must be legislating for a world, not as it exists to-day, but as it was millions of years ago. Again, great as is the time in which mankind has existed on this earth (a million years or so beyond the time stated in the chronologies of Usher or Hales) this period is as nothing compared with the time in which the world existed before man, or even life, appeared on the scene at all. What did God do then? Again, this earth is but as a speck among the sands of all the seashores, as compared with the stars in the Universe. Why have the inhabitants of this speck—or, to be exact, only a limited and favoured number of them—been singled out for Divine attention? These are problems which the theologian must solve if he is to maintain his position for veracity in the minds of thinking people.

GOD IS ALMIGHTY. If so, then every act done by man or beast, on this earth, whether good or evil, must not only be done with God's consent; it must be the actual Act of God, mankind or the beasts being only the executive agents. Therefore, God fights all battles, not only on one side, but on both. In the Great War he even defeated himself. To state otherwise is to confess that the Germans had one "Almighty," and the Allies another. How two "Almighties" can exist together is another problem for the theologians.

GOD IS ALL MERCIFUL.—After the above, this statement needs no amplification; one proposition cancels out the other.

GOD IS OMNIPRESENT. It follows that, if God be everywhere, He must be everything, otherwise if anything exist which is not a part of God himself, it must be occupying space which belongs to God, and, therefore, He cannot be everywhere.

HERBERT CESCINSKY.

(To be concluded)

On Hurting One's Feelings

THERE is one characteristic which most religious people have in common, and that is the ease with which their feelings can be "hurt." Most readers of this journal will have come across individuals who resent the least allusion to their beliefs, and who will insist that such controversial subjects as Christianity should be altogether banned in company. Roman Catholics, in particular, will assume a most pained expression when anything is said which they construe as derogatory to their own sect; and they will beg one in a most reverent tone of voice, to spare their feelings. This is, of course, in direct contrast to their usual truculent attitude in their own press, and on their own platforms, where they do their best to heap scorn upon "Protestants" and other "heretics." Very few ever indulge in debate; but if they can get a more or less uneducated Dissenter before them, with what triumph will they attack him, and if possible, figuratively make mincemeat of him. No question about hurting *his* feelings!

Even in a properly organized debate which is not on religion, believers hate to have one or both the speakers refer to Christianity as if it were a worn-out

superstition. If reference is made to devils, the Christians present resent fun being poked at the exploits of the Devil with Jesus. You can poke as much fun as you like at devils in general; but the Christian Devil, if he is spoken of at the same time as "Our Lord," seems to be just as sacrosanct. One senses a feeling of horror in ladies, in particular, if the story of Jesus being carried about by the Devil is likened to the story of Aladdin being carried about by the genie of his Lamp. And in the good old days when blasphemy was anything that "hurt" religious people, a speaker who had the temerity to point out this comparison and its relevancy would have been in all probability punished as thoroughly as the law permitted.

As far as we are concerned, it is, of course, possible that anything that we say, merely because we are Freethinkers and not because of the way in which we clothe our language, will hurt. It is almost always "blasphemy" to the religious person if his beliefs are attacked. As a matter of fact, there is no reason to use extravagant or "bad" language. Religion can be attacked in the most courteous way; and our case is so strong as to be almost impregnable. There is no need to use the word popularized by Mr. Bernard Shaw, however much it makes for emphasis. We are fortunate to have had a pretty high standard set for us. Bradlaugh was never guilty of an offensive word in his numerous debates and lectures. Foote was the very essence of culture; and those of us who heard him will never forget his quiet dignified presence and splendid delivery. And Ingersoll often reached a high level of poetry in his world-famous discourses. But they were never the less deadly for all that, and were actually attacked on the score of "taste" just the same. Official Christianity may one day admit how much harm was done to it by these great Freethinkers' devastating attacks.

It should be noted, however, that the delicate susceptibilities of religionists can be found in many people who, one would have thought, had shed many religious characteristics. Let any one try, for example, to say a word not altogether in praise of Hitler, or Mosley, at a Fascist meeting. He will be lucky if he escapes with a broken head. Or try at any meeting where Communists are present to venture to differ from Marx, or Stalin, and see what a holy row will follow. As for criticizing Russia. . . !

Now, why—particularly on a Freethought platform—should not Russia be criticized, or Stalin, or Franco, or Hitler, or the opinions they stand for? Why should people who call themselves Freethinkers feel hurt if their political opinions are touched? Why should any subject be, to use religious parlance, in any way sacrosanct? Why should we claim the right to attack religion without let or hindrance, and discriminate when it comes to politics? Is it because there should be no criticism of certain political opinions? Long ago Mill pointed out that "All silencing of discussion is an assumption of infallibility," and one can only hope that that pregnant sentence will never be forgotten wherever the flag of true Freethought flies.

Feeling "hurt" is, of course, just pure intolerance. "The other fellow has no right to think differently from me. He must be wrong, and therefore he must be suppressed. If he is not with me, he must be against me, and, of course, I am absolutely right. I say so and I should know."

It seems to me that this attitude is singularly like that of Roman Catholics and ultra-Protestants. Surely no one is infallible—not even Freethinkers—and certainly not on such controversial subjects as politics and religion. I never hear this whining of "leave

my politics alone," without feeling the harm that is being done to genuine Freethought. It is just the kind of thing we are getting at this moment from the religious people who are doing their best to stop next year's International Freethought Conference being held in London. "Write to your Member of Parliament about it; send indignant protests to the Home Secretary, and to your local press. Get the Catholics on our National newspapers and in the B.B.C. to speak against it. Think how our feelings will be hurt at the torrent of blasphemy which will be poured out by the anti-God speakers!"

These people never bother to think that their crude superstitions and silly processions can be proved to be a thousand times more harmful than any of our "blasphemies." Yet they certainly have the right to express themselves in this way—unless we have forgotten the lesson taught by Mill in his fine essay *On Liberty*.

It is, of course, very difficult to be without bias, to be impartial, to listen quietly to someone with whom we intensely disagree. But is not that the lesson of Freethought?

H. CUTNER.

Luxemburg & Christian Fascism

"The evil that thou causeth to be done,
That is thy means to live."

AMONG Esperanto papers, I have not found one which is devoted to Freethought, and what may be called Scientific Atheist Philosophy. Still, in some of those journals, one sometimes finds items and articles of some interest to such as us, who support the *Freethinker*. Particularly in the journals of the Workers' Esperanto Movement, there is to be found—fairly frequently—something of interest to Freethinkers. Of this nature is an article on Luxemburg, in "Senacieca Revuo" (*Nationless Review*) for September; and I have Englished some paragraphs out of it, for the benefit of our readers.

The first part of the article deals with the geographic and economic side; and describes how this little country, shut in between three large States, has suffered since the Great War. There is a little, not a great deal, of mining and steel industry; but the chief means of the country depend upon the produce of the land, cattle and poultry, of which they produce far more than they can consume themselves in a population of 260,000. If it were not for an economic "alliance" with Belgium, they should have had to destroy much of their produce—as some other countries have had to destroy coffee, grain, rice, fish, etc.; for they have lost Germany as a market, and the tourist business is not what it was.

One paragraph gave me some new information. During the Great War, Luxemburg was occupied by the Germans, right from the beginning of the war; and "The Luxemburg business people profited much out of that situation." To-day, on the French border, the forts have their great guns directed towards Germany. On the other side, at the German border, are the great German guns for a duel with those of France. The guns have a range that will each reach to the other's forts. Thus, if or when "the next war" comes; the shells will be flying across the heads of the Luxemburgers, in both directions. Apparently, there will be little chance of peaceful sleep when those guns begin to roar!

The writer, "1768," then proceeds:—

"If, externally, the fate of the Luxemburgers depends upon the peace—or the opposite—of her great

neighbours; internally, it is subject to the changes ("caprice") of Vatican Policy. The greatest part of the people are Roman Catholics, against whom the Liberal Party middle class, the Socialists, and the Communists, form a bloc as a not-to-be-ignored minority in the Parliament. The Roman Catholic bloc comprises all that the country has, from the point-of-view of Conservatism. Particularly in the small towns on the Moselle, I could observe how the peasant population faithfully obey the orders of the Church; how adults and children, with the same fervour, visit the churches several times a day, with a discipline apparently unbreakable. One must notice, first, that the language of the inhabitants is German; and, in the churches, the priests preach in German. Secondly, that the Bishop of Trier, reigning over one of the most Catholic districts of Europe, sits enthroned not far from the Luxemburg border; and, consequently, extends his influence over that little country. Thirdly, that in a little Luxemburg town, Echternach, there takes place—every year—a leaping procession, famous in the world, in which mysticism reaches a degree of mass hysteria.

"From that it follows that now, more than before, the Government internal policy is Fascist in nature. (The Pope, indeed, in very Catholic countries, supports the pro-Fascist rule—as may be seen in Spain!) Externally, however, it is against Hitlerism; because Hitler persecutes the Catholic Church, has adopted 'New Paganism,' and even wearies the Trier Archbishop by his decrees. So there is a double aspect of the Fascist problem somewhat as in the Land of Schüsnigg, where the struggle is taking place, and taking place against two fronts—Socialism and Nazism. In many respects the Luxemburg Government policy is similar to that of the present Austrian Government. In Luxemburg, also, the ruling Party aims at introducing a regime of 'Christian Fascism.' For that purpose, it caused a decree to be voted, in the Parliament, against Communism; but, being compelled to submit its Fascist plan to a Referendum of the whole people, it experienced—on June 6—a rather serious defeat. The tourist can still see, on the walls and doors, the placards in which the Reactionaries begged the people to vote 'yes'; the Liberals and Socialists, to reply by 'no.' The 'no' votes exceeded somewhat the pro-Fascist votes, and gained 52 per cent thus defeating the immediate menace of Fascism.

"As I have already said, the language of the people is German. The people speak a German dialect; while papers and books appear in the German written language, which schools, the Church, and other institutions also use. But, since the war, the French language—always taught in the schools along with German—has occupied a more important place; and the children study French, not merely compulsorily, but with considerable application. The tendency to give more favour to the French language has been more emphasized since the accession of Hitler in Germany. The economic situation, also, the closing of the German market and economic 'alliance' with Belgium has been favourable to this tendency. Railway stations and official buildings have French names, and the spelling of place names has been made 'à la Française.'"

So much from "1768."

Religion in general, and Christianity in particular, are among the greatest enemies of Human Progress. This is true, in varying degree, of all sections of Christianity—down to the Salvation Army. Conscience of how they have lost ground, they are almost desperate in their attempts to regain their vicious hold over the minds and bodies of men and women.

It is not alone in Italy, Austria, and Spain, that Religion is the ally of Political Reaction. In this country, some Protestant Christians, as well as Roman Catholic ones, have been talking about the "corporate State" with signs of satisfaction. Some time ago one religious writer—a Protestant Christian—not only approved the "corporate State"; but argued that "the churches," as corporate Bodies, should have representation in the corporate State. The existence of the Religious Committee on the B.B.C.—the evil influence of Religion with Sir John Reith—and the activities of Religious "interests" (often secretly) in all Political Parties—prove that there is more than a beginning, in Great Britain, of that same alliance against civilization.

Let us learn from what has happened elsewhere. There never was more need for the non-political Free-thought educational work than there is to-day. We of the National Secular Society can be proud of our past. Let us be worthy of that past by working to maintain what has been gained. If every Freethinker, regardless of his or her political shade, were to support the *Freethinker* and the N.S.S., there would be little chance of "Christian Fascism" regaining its evil hold upon the British People. If it be good to be a Freethinker, it is better still to help in the work, and any one who wants to can "do it now."

ATIOSO ZENOO.

Killing For Profit

GIVING evidence at the Arms Commission, Sir Maurice Hankey stated that the case against private manufacture had been built upon certain alleged episodes, often misrepresented. He said: "I submit that the suggestion that the manufacture of arms is a business on a low moral plane, is unjustified." . . . "The extravagant language is inappropriate and uncalled for."

Sir Maurice complained bitterly that such terms as—"merchants of death," "bloody traffic," and "war-traders," had continued the process of creating prejudice against a body of men who are, he apparently thinks, urged only by the highest altruistic motives.

Mark Anthony, speaking of Brutus, one of the assassins of Caesar, said: "Brutus is an honourable man," but then, of course, he was speaking "sarcastic like."

But now let us take the opinion, not of some Pacifist who, we should probably be told, speaks without authority or knowledge, because he is a Pacifist, but of Lord Wemyss, late Admiral of the Fleet. He was firmly convinced that the principal authors of the war were to be found in the Armament Trusts, and that they had influenced public opinion in every country by stirring-up strife and creating an atmosphere of hostility, ill-will and suspicion between nations. He further said: "International armament rings, playing into one another's hands, have a direct interest in the inflation of Navy and Army estimates and in war scares; for the more armaments are increased abroad, the more they have, obviously, to be increased at home."

This is taken from the *Life of Lord Wemyss*, written by his wife, and compiled from his letters and diaries: yet Sir Maurice Hankey, Secretary to the Committee of Imperial Defence, tried to discredit this by saying that Lord Wemyss was not the author. Surely nobody was more competent to write his life than his own wife, and surely nobody could do it more accurately than from his own letters and diaries!

Compare these views of a man who knew war from every angle, with the kind of slush that is served up to us in defence of armaments, by people like Lord Halifax, President of the Board of Education. "People who trade in armaments," he said, "are no better and no worse than the ordinary business man." If this is true, then ordinary business must be in a pretty rotten state.

When we turn from England to America and the Arm-

ament Commission there, we may take the statement of Mr. J. P. Morgan, who supplied the Allies with armaments during the War, and whose firm incidentally made £6,000,000 over the transaction. Mr. Morgan said: "There are some things it is better to die for than to live without, and a nation's self-respect and independence are two of them"

Now what Mr. Morgan really meant was that there are some things it is better for *other men* to die for than to live without. He does not suggest that he should do any of the dying: his work in supplying the instruments of death is so valuable that he must live, leaving it for others to die.

Whether Mr. Morgan's firm made 6 or 60 millions out of the war in supplying armaments is, in one sense, a matter of little importance. The question is—what did he receive the money for? For one purpose only—to cause human wreckage.

Having ourselves supplied Germany with much of the material necessary to build up a huge air force, we are now asked to submit cheerfully to a taxation to combat, if necessary, the German Air Force that we have helped to create.

There is no need to dwell at length on all this. The enormous profits which armament firms have made during the war, and are still making, have been dealt with by various writers. I am not so much concerned with the financial side of the question as with the human element. The question we must answer is—are the people of the world to continue to be bamboozled, fooled and killed because a few men, mad with the lust for gold, are prepared to sacrifice humanity and civilization?

The crucifixion of one God or a dozen gods on Calvary, was nothing compared with what we will suffer in the next war unless we can arouse a consciousness in people that they shall not be driven along like herds of cattle to the abattoirs.

If we cannot prevent this, then we must preach all the time to women that the greatest folly any woman can commit is to bring a child into a world no longer governed by rational human beings, but by madmen whose chief thought is directed to killing. If the world cannot exist without war, then let us at least know against whom and for what reason war is to be waged.

If there is one thing that shocks these noble-minded Christian armament manufacturers, it is the mention of dum-dum bullets. They all agree that the dum-dum bullet is barbarous. It really shows one the kindly natures of these people who manufacture mustard and poison gases, high power shells that blow men into smithereens, sharp-edged bayonets to thrust into their opponents, liquid-fire to blind and scorch, bombs to burst and tear, and petroleum with which to spray trenches and burn men to death. These things are at first denounced as barbarous, only to become later part of a legitimate trade.

Recently, King George reviewed 80,000 ex-service men in Hyde Park. We read of over 200 blinded men from St. Dunstan's walking past the saluting base arm-in-arm in that procession. How shocked the armament-makers would have been had these men been blinded by other methods than by the legitimate articles of war trade!

Of course the Church was present in force at the Parade—bayonets and surpllices seem to run hand-in-hand. The white nightgown of the parson and the steel hat of the soldier are old friends. And, of course, there is the usual drivel about being a strong nation for defence and not for offence, and that we were armed for God and King and country, and not with the idea of killing anybody with these armaments.

However, it is not much use pointing out the increased cost of armaments and their danger, unless some remedy is suggested. There are in England alone, over 40,000,000 people, and there are probably, at most, a few thousands who have shares in armament firms; yet these armament firms were largely responsible for the last war (as stated by Lord Wemyss) and unless their activities are checked, they will be largely responsible for the next one.

Read what Lord Welby recently said: "We are in the hands of an organization of crooks. They are politicians,

generals, manufacturers of armaments and journalists. All of them are anxious for unlimited expenditure, and go on inventing scares to terrify the public and to terrify Ministers of the Crown."

It may be urged with some truth, that the armament makers do not actually want war; what suits the armament makers much better is to keep the public war-minded. They want to keep the war-kettle simmering; but unfortunately it has a trick of boiling over at times.

In the old Wild West days, the gun-man who did not have a nick upon his gun to prove that he had killed somebody, was not in the real sense a gun-man at all. And the carrying of guns was in itself an incitement to slaughter. So, in the same way to-day, guns are dangerous playthings which may go off at any time.

When the Russian, British and French fleets wiped out the Turkish and Egyptian fleets at Navarino, in 1827, it was afterwards discovered that the battle had been started by the accidental discharge of a Turkish gun which was being cleaned by a sailor.

When words like "patriotism" and "honour" are used by the death-merchants, they are simply prostituted, because these people, even when sincere, do not know what the words really mean. They ask us—"What would you do if an enemy attacked your home and assaulted your wife?" But what they really mean is: "What would you do if war broke out and our dividends and capital were in danger; would you be prepared to fight, and if necessarily die, for our business interests?"

The men on the other side who are also fighting for big business, will be so war-drunk that, instead of attacking the people who fooled them, they will proceed to attack the other poor dupes.

The first and most vitally necessary thing to do, for any government that means to stop war, is to take the control of armaments out of the hands of private companies. This *must* be done, and any Government showing a reluctance in complying with the proposal, will clearly prove that, in withholding their support, they are playing into the hands of the armament firms. There may be other factors besides the private manufacture of armaments that cause war—handing over the private manufacture and control of armaments to the Government may not be the one and only solution to the problem; but it will go a long way towards it.

F. A. HORNIBROOK.

Correspondence

WILL WAR SUCCEED?

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—In your issue of October 31, the writer of "Acid Drops" says: "Whether the massacre method will succeed is another question. It did not succeed in the past." Moreover, the writer says that by massacre he means war. His assertion therefore amounts to this, that war has not succeeded in the past.

I cannot conceive of a more false historical statement. Land is the basis of all human existence, and nearly every people in the world got its land by war. The Saxons got England by war, and so did the Normans later on. The Franks got France by war. The Lombards got Lombardy by war. The Turks got Turkey by war. The Americans got America by a ferocious war with the Red Indians, which went on continuously for two hundred years. The British have the greatest empire that ever existed, and nearly the whole of it was got by war.

No disease can ever be abolished until it has first been correctly diagnosed. The disease of war will go on for ever, unless both its causes and its effects can be exactly ascertained. I must say that most of the people who consider themselves advanced are showing singularly little intelligence in dealing with this subject.

R. B. KERR.

THE RECALL TO FREETHOUGHT

SIR,—A scientist inventor to whom I forwarded my article, "The Recall to Freethought," has replied by sending the following comments on orthodoxy in religion:—

From the relationships of governments to their State religions, it would seem that the details which constitute an orthodoxy have been contrived (or the important ones) to be useful both to the church officials and governments in the matter of securing revenues and control.

... Once established as a system an orthodoxy must be fixed and adhere to its artificial laws and rules. I believe that no Roman Catholic would be permitted to dispute any of the tenets of that church. I do not know whether the doubter would merely be talked to, fined, or excommunicated: it may be that his fate would depend upon his financial status.

MAUD SIMON.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON

OUTDOOR

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Highbury Corner): 8.0, Saturday, Mr. L. Ebury. White Stone Pond, Hampstead, 11.0, 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.

INDOOR

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH (Alexandra Hotel, South Side, Clapham Common, S.W.4): 7.30, Debate—"Is Theism Rational?" *Affir.*: Mr. B. Fuller. *Neg.*: Mr. F. P. Corrigan.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.): 11.0, S. K. Ratcliffe—"Progress and Catastrophe."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, Debate—"Is Spiritualism a Fact?" *Affir.*: M. Barbanell, Editor, *Psychic News*. *Neg.*: T. F. Palmer, N.S.S.

COUNTRY

INDOOR.

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane): 7.0, G. Thompson (Liverpool)—"Religion and Freedom of Women."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Bristol Street Schools): 7.0, The film, "Battleship Potemkin" and short address.

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Laycock's Forum, Albion Court, Kirkgate): 7.15, Mr. R. Day—"Scepticism Unlimited."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley), 2.30, Mr. Jack Clayton—"Christianity and Crime."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Councillor Jean Mann—"Faulty Laws as seen by a Magistrate."

GREENOCK BRANCH N.S.S. (Shepherd's Hall, Regent Street): 7.0, Mr. Arthur Copland—"No Peace on Earth."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. Joseph McCabe—"The Myth and Age of Christianity."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Islington Liverpool, entrance in Christian Street): 7.0, W. A. Atkinson (Manchester)—"Christianity—Its Origin and Influence."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. ("King's Café," Oxford Road), Mr. L. Ebury (London)—"Atheism a Social Necessity."

NORTH EAST FEDERATION OF N.S.S. BRANCHES (1 Rothsay Street): 3.0, A Meeting will be held. Co-operative Hall, 7.0, Messrs. Brighton, Dalkin and Charlton.

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N.S.S. (General and Municipal Workers' Rooms, Ferry Street): 7.30, Thursday, Mr. R. Kelly (Newcastle)—"Communism."

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The National Secular Society was founded in 1866 by Charles Bradlaugh. He remained its President until shortly before his death, and the N.S.S. has never ceased to live up to the tradition of "Thorough" which Bradlaugh by his life so brilliantly exemplified.

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

If you appreciate the work that Bradlaugh did, if you admire the ideals for which he lived and fought, it is not enough merely to admire. The need for action and combined effort is as great to-day as ever. You can best help by filling up the attached form and joining the Society founded by Bradlaugh.

PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS.

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

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

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

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

The Funds of the National Secular Society are legally secured by Trust Deed. The Trustees are the President, Treasurer and Secretary of the Society, with two others appointed by the Executive. There is thus the fullest possible guarantee for the proper expenditure of whatever funds the Society has at its disposal.

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I hereby give and bequeath (*Here insert particulars of legacy*), free of all death duties, to the Trustees of the National Secular Society for all or any of the purposes of the Trust Deed of the said Society.

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I desire to join the National Secular Society, and I pledge myself, if admitted as a member, to co-operate in promoting its objects.

Name

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Occupation

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