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Views and Opinions

The Burden of the Book

CHRISTIANITY is "A Religion of the Book." Other religions were avowedly built upon what men thought about God, and so the way was left open for rejection, or for such modification as followers of any religion will put up with. But the Christian Church did not claim merely that it had the truth, but that it had got the truth from God himself. The information came "straight from the horse's mouth." The Church knew the way in which the world began, and also how it would end. It knew how man came into the world and what would happen to him when he went out of it. The Church held that it was the only organization in the world that could authoritatively say "Thus saith the Lord," and so far as it could it has punctuated its message with fire and the prison, with social boycott and deliberate lying.

But the burden of a direct revelation from God is a heavy one. You cannot afford ever to be wrong. Somehow or the other you must always be right. With a "Thus saith the Lord" on your lips you really cannot afford to say either that "I misunderstood what the Lord said," or "the Lord did not make his meaning clear." In either case the authority of the divine message is weakened. A message that admits of a dozen different meanings, or which is delivered to one who cannot understand it, is a very faulty instrument. And the Christian Church does actually claim that from the earliest time it has preached "revealed truth." Sometimes it is called "Christian truth," sometimes "The truth according to Christianity." The Greeks had another name for it, so have a great many of the moderns.

In justice to Christianity one must admit that the Church has talked much about a "progressive revelation" that was given to the pre-Christian world. But that came to an end with Christianity. Having reached that point the revelation stopped. God looked at what his progressive revelation had led to and called

a halt. Either he felt that he could get nothing better, or gave up the whole thing in sheer despair.

* * *

Bringing "Revelation" up to Date

But it is rather difficult completely to stop the critical inquisitiveness of the human mind. Even the Roman Catholic Church, after standing fast by its decree against the teachings of Galileo until about 1822, had at length to give papal permission for the earth to go round the sun. And during the last two or three generations there have been great changes in general opinion about the Christian religion. The Bible is no longer looked upon as infallible by, probably, the majority of people in Britain. Angels have developed into men and women, the devil has become a gentlemanly character, and even God himself has ceased to throw about thunderbolts whenever he is angry, or scatter disease-germs over a country because a number of its inhabitants have displeased him. And reading God's revelation a great many people have come to wonder whether babies ever came into the world in ancient Judea in a way different from the way they make their debut in modern London, or whether a man who was dead in B.C. 33 was less permanently dead than one in 1938.

Some fifteen years ago (1922) the Archbishops of Canterbury and York came to the conclusion that God's revelation to man was not clear enough. It needed rubbing up or toning down; and accordingly a Commission of thirty was appointed, all of them—with the exception of four—professional Christians, with the following reference:—

To consider the nature and grounds of Christian doctrine . . . with a view to investigating how far it is possible to remove or diminish existing differences.

That Commission has just reported (January 14). It is a lengthy report, 242 pages, and I intend dealing with such parts of it as affect the central Christian position. I am not in the least interested in special ecclesiastical customs, except as far as they serve to illustrate the persistence of savage culture.

Now on the face of it the two Archbishops threw up the sponge when they ordered this Commission. A Church that has the word of God, directly from God, in its possession should not require a Commission to determine what the devil God meant by his revelation. It is true that the Commission opened its meetings with prayer, and also "celebrated Holy Communion" before each sitting. So they were in constant touch with God all the time, they had God inside them, and God outside them, but in spite of this I think heresy will go on developing. There is an admission of this in a remark by the Archbishop of York. He says that if the Commission had begun its sittings to-day instead of fifteen years ago.

Its perspective would be different.

That is a clerical way of saying that heresy is stronger now than it was sixteen years ago. But the Archbishop also says,

It is not our function to pioneer.

And with that I quite agree. The function of the clergy is never to pioneer, only to lead backward. So the Commission satisfied itself with a statement of *Christian truth*—other kinds of truth the Commission probably thought might go to the devil, from whom I suspect most of the members believe it came.

* * *

How it is Done

It is too much to expect that a Commission of thirty avowed Christians would tell the plain truth about the Bible even to-day. They were not, of course, appointed for this, but to see in what way they could satisfy those who thought that at least some of the truth ought to be told. This is the way they did it :—

The Christian religion is founded upon a specific revelation of God in history. To this revelation scripture and the Church alike bear witness.

That statement is as crooked as the head of a bishop's staff—which might reasonably be taken to have a moral significance. The Bible is not a witness to anything. The Bible writers say they had a revelation from God. But that is not evidence of its truth. And the Church is not a witness either. The revelation was not given to the Church at all. It accepted the revelation, that is all one can say. But to say that there is historic evidence that a revelation was given by God to man is—well, a Christian truth.

But we must be fair. The Commission says :—

Belief that the Bible is the inspired record of God's self-revelation to man . . . is a conclusion drawn from the contents of [the books of the Bible] and the spiritual insight displayed in them.

Poppycock ! Any intelligent working journalist could have made out a better case as a result of sixteen years prayerful meditation—without God Almighty to help. Does the contents of the Bible cover the recipes for curing diseases, or the command to exterminate witches, or the authority to hold slaves, or the account of the origin of languages, or the command that men should be stoned to death for gathering sticks on the sabbath, or for introducing the worship of strange gods? The Commission must know that these barbarities and brutalities are common to most early religions. Does "spiritual insight" cover whatever decent moral teaching the Bible contains? If the Commission believes that this required a special revelation from God we advise them to read a book such as *The Dawn of Conscience*, by that celebrated Egyptologist, J. W. Breasted. They will find there not merely the best ethical precepts that the Bible contains—and in much the same language, but a mass of teaching superior to the Bible, admittedly written centuries before the Bible existed. I wonder whether the Commission would agree that either God must have "pinched" these teachings from the Egyptians and passed them off on the Jews as his own, or that the Jews did the stealing and passed them off as having come direct from God? In view of the situation it is rather curious to find the Commission saying :—

The Bible produces the conviction that it is not only about God, but that it is of God; God speaks to man through the Bible.

It produces that conviction only on such men as the Commissioners, who naturally feel that way, and on such others who read the Bible in terms of their early training. "God speaks to man." And after all these centuries a Commission of thirty experts has

to be appointed to determine what the deuce it is he meant when he did speak. A speaker who cannot make himself understood should remain silent. Even the Commission cannot say where inspiration resides, or in what it consists, for it says that it may be either in the individual authors, or it may be in the selection of the material already existing. Which is only another way of saying that inspiration may be wherever you like to find it. I prefer the early Christian report of the way that inspired gospels were selected from the non-inspired ones. All of them were placed under the table. The Committee of inspection prayed, and the inspired gospels jumped on top of the table.

Of the Bible as a whole we are told :—

Christian thinkers are not necessarily bound to the thought-forms employed by the biblical writers.

A way of saying that anyone may interpret these thought-forms as they damned well please. And :—

The authority ascribed to the Bible must not be interpreted as prejudging the conclusions of historical, critical, and scientific investigation in any field, not excluding that of the biblical documents themselves.

The Bible, then, may mean what you please to make it—under pressure from knowledge that flatly contradicts it. But until there is a flat contradiction, and until that flat contradiction can no longer be concealed and ignored, we must go on believing in it as our ancestors did. You may say any part is inspired because no one is quite sure what it means. If it is shown to be wrong historically, or ethically, or scientifically, that is because the interpreters were at fault, or the inspiration was absent when that particular manuscript was adopted, or you must not keep to the thought-forms of the Bible. But inspiration is there, even though you cannot say where. Above all you cannot prove inspiration to be false, because no one knows what is inspired or what is not. I fancy I could make out a case for the inspiration of Old Moore's Almanac if given the same latitude. And if Old Moore was the bulwark of vested and sinister interests I feel fairly certain that we might have had a commission reporting on Old Moore in some such manner as the Archbishop's Commission has reported on the Bible.

One final sentence from the Commission needs citing :—

The tradition of the inerrancy of the Bible commonly held in the Church until the beginning of the nineteenth century . . . cannot be maintained in the light of the knowledge now at our disposal.

That is a semi-official disposal of the infallibility of the Bible. That amount of honesty must be recorded, although the Commission might plead that some of the truth must be admitted if any of the lie is to be retained. The Church has clung to every doctrine so long as it could. As the Archbishop of York said, it is not the business of the Commission (or of the Church) to pioneer. As Ingersoll put it, the Christian Church has always stood with its back to the light worshipping the darkness. It is the jungle, not the broad highway, in which religion flourishes.

So the Commission, practically dishonest, as every such Commission is bound to be, rises from its labours feeling that so far as the Bible is concerned it has played a heroic part, fearlessly confessing a little of the truth, careless of the consequences. But not a word of regret for the long and bitter persecution of those brave men and women who for the past 150 years have gone to prison, suffered legal injustice, social boycott, and been made the targets for Christian lying and slander for the "crime" of telling the truth about the Bible. Just over one hundred

years ago there were at one time in this country no less than twenty men and women in prison for questioning the truth of the Bible. Just a year ago, when we issued our edition of Paine's *Age of Reason*—one of the cheapest books ever issued at any time by any publisher—while there were a number of notices in the press, the majority took the road of saying that Paine's criticisms of the Bible were out of date. Substantially they are not. The views he attacked are held by large numbers of believers to-day; and, at any rate, it has taken a Commission of thirty Christian scholars fifteen years to agree with Paine in his main contention.

A small gesture of regret for the past action of the Christian Churches might have been made, a small acknowledgment of the way in which these unbelievers educated the Christian world would have been at least gracious. But one must remember that this was a commission of Christians—professional Christians. Their business was not to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Above all they were not prohibited suggesting falsehoods. And their main work was to find a way by which the old lie might be maintained. There are times when even in the case of religion a little of the truth must be admitted by its exponents if any of the lie is to be made profitable. So far the Commission has probably done the best it could do.

Some other points in the report I will deal with in another article.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Saintly Scholarship!

"He is a fugitive that flies from reason."

Marcus Aurelius.

"The eagle never lost so much time as when he submitted to learn of the crow."—Blake.

THE RIGHT-REVEREND W. R. INGE, better known as "the gloomy dean," is reputed to be a scholar and a ripe, good one. In the ranks of the clergy this is a rare distinction, for most of these "sons-of-God" are possessed of a too generous measure of mental deficiency. The former dean is so much more than the heroes of hundreds of tea-fights, and since his retirement his outlook seems to have broadened and his character mellowed. His weekly causerie in a London newspaper shows his wide sympathies, and, as a rule, helps to relieve the tedium of the paper's customary sensationalism.

An old tag reminds us that a leopard cannot change his spots, and, occasionally, the dean forsakes the path of philosophic calm, and repeats the paltry patter of the pulpit. Maybe, it is just sheer habit, but it grates a little coming from a writer who has been, latterly, a model of urbanity, and almost of sobriety. Furthermore, the pious prejudices that he voices are so representative of the common priestly attitude that they are worth noting. They are not the real and unmistakable Inge, but a relash of things said by trick theologians so many times that they almost believe them: As, however, they have been republished in a widely-circulated newspaper, it is as well to check these statements, and turn a searchlight on Christian Evidence methods in high places.

The article in question is entitled "The Philosopher and the Christians," and it appeared in the *Evening Standard* (December 15). It deals with Marcus Aurelius and the persecution of the early Christians, not exactly a topical subject for a daily paper, but still a piece of pious polemic. It reads like a report of an old sermon, and is only saved from insignif-

ance by the felicitous quotations from so many writers, and by the personality of the writer, who is, perhaps, one of the best known and best liked of present-day parsons.

The dean is guilty of urbane insolence in his prejudiced view of Marcus Aurelius, whom he calls "the hero of modern Agnostics," and accuses of conniving at "the most disgusting exhibitions of diabolical cruelty that history records." He adds the emperor's education was "entirely bookish," and suggests that he was a simpleton by saying that, while everyone in Rome knew that the Empress Faustina was a wanton, Marcus thought her a good wife. He is said to have died, "resigned to the will of heaven," and the reader is reminded that "saints and philosophers on the throne have been complete failures." The dean also tells us that the Emperor "was attended by sorcerers on his campaigns." As if this happening was astonishing near two thousand years ago, when one remembers that far more recent monarchs have been attended by archbishops; and that bishops sit and vote in the House of Lords. The dean writes as if he were living in a balloon, and was as remote from reality as Captain Gulliver in Lilliput.

Now, this sort of thing is to be expected from a green young curate, or a Romish priest, but what is to be said of a widely-read man like Dean Inge writing in this sorry strain? Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* can be bought for a small sum, and is as easily procurable as a prayer-book. The standard edition has a lengthy preface by George Long, in which he dissipated the legendary stories quoted by the dean with regard to the alleged terrible persecution of the Christians. As to the silly libels on the Emperor, the *Meditations* supply the best answer. Marcus Aurelius' education was not entirely "bookish," nor was he at all "like a monk in a cloister." He was fond of boxing, running, wrestling, and of boar-hunting, and his education was in a manly mould, and by no means that of an anchorite. Indeed, the Emperor actually penned some of his *Meditations* in a tent on the battlefield, and all his life he learned "to scorn delights and live laborious days," which is more than can be said of half a hundred rectors and vicars of the derelict City of London churches, and so many in other places.

According to the dean, the Emperor "embraced the Stoical philosophy, which taught that autocrats ought to be murdered." And so forth, and so on, adding insult to injury in the true spirit of a Christian charity. What a frame of mind! "One would have thought that they (the early Christians) would be as much respected as the Quakers," chortles the dear dean. Well! well! The early Quakers, like so many other Nonconformists, were burnt alive at the stake by their kind fellow Christians. And the persecution of the Dissenters in this country took place after the vastly overrated "Religion of Love" had been operative for near fifteen centuries. Doubtless, the early Christian suffered, but so did our own English Nonconformists, but what becomes of the preposterous claim that the teaching of this persecuting Christian religion makes men more humane? Especially, when one recalls the many trials for witchcraft, when the most helpless of the weaker sex were judicially murdered because of the Biblical text: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live"; and Jewish people have been hounded like mad dogs.

It will be seen that Dean Inge either forgets his "Marcus Aurelius," or he is attacking the Emperor because he was a Stoic philosopher, and not a Christian. With regard to the Dean's remark that philosophers make unsuccessful rulers, it is sufficient to point to Frederick the Great, who was both a philosopher and a very successful monarch.

If Dean Inge penned his caricature of Marcus

Aurelius the while his tongue was in his cheek, then you must regard him as a keen and unscrupulous man of business. His whole atmosphere is heavy with the poison-gas of the Churches. Reading that one article, it is difficult to believe that he has ever studied life outside a deanery and a place of worship, for where else could he concoct such a gross collection of lies of one of the noblest of men? Is it not hitting below the belt thus to try to take advantage of the average reader? When the Education Act has run another half century, the readers of newspapers, perhaps, will cease to hunger for such sawdust, and will prefer the bread of knowledge. If so, it will not be due to the assistance of the salaried sons-of-God.

In sober truth, and not in the cant of journalism, let us wish for the recovery of Dr. Inge. There are far too many writers for whom the epitaph, "Died of the Christian Fallacy" is good, and good enough. But the dean need not be one of these nitwits. So desperate is the dilemma that almost is one persuaded that Christian advocates will use any weapon to fight an opponent, and that hypocrisy and hatred are inseparable from the Oriental superstition they defend. For no creed exhibits such a divorce between precept and practice.

"Peace upon earth! was said, we sing it,
And pay a million priests to bring it.
After two thousand years of mass
We've got so far as poison gas."

MIMNERMUS.

The Religion of Mr. McGovern

IN his pamphlet, *Why the Bishops Back Franco*, issued by the I.L.P., John McGovern, M.P., who is himself a Roman Catholic, makes a report of his detailed inquiries into Catholic feeling in Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia and other cities. His tour of 6,000 miles in four weeks was conducted with a view to considering charges made by the Roman Catholic press in this country. He interviewed hundreds of people in all walks of life, and witnessed actual fighting from a distance of 300 yards. Regarding the atrocities he saw his pamphlet may be consulted, but I am here interested rather in his conclusions, for which he appears to have had indisputable evidence. His photographs of a gun with the Sacred Heart and a bag with the Sacred Host are not self-sufficient, since they do not show that the photographer himself couldn't have had them placed there; nor are they conclusive evidence that sacred charms are only used by the Fascists and not by their opponents. However, they may be accepted as genuine when taken in relation to the accumulated evidence, and there are also pictures in his pamphlet of Fascists acting as altar boys at Celebration of the Mass at Lerida, and of congregations of Fascists (armed) being blessed in church before revolt.

Mr. McGovern concludes that Spanish Fascism had its birth in the church, which had become anxious as to its monopolies and privileges. Trials of prisoners associated with the Catholic Fascist Youth Organization provided him with conclusive evidence that the Roman Catholic Church had sided with the Fascists.

To the question, "Can you tell me why this church was burned?" he elicited the same answer from whomsoever he asked. They all said that it had been used as a Fascist centre for machine guns. Such is the cause for which, he says, "Roman Catholic

bishops and priests in this country are raising money in the churches—money to buy bombs and explosives in order to blow Catholic workers and their children to pieces in Madrid." A Roman Catholic bishop, addressing Moorish troops near Burgos, said, "You will have a special place in Paradise for your part in this struggle."

There was a crowd of tens of thousands outside the palace of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Barcelona, demanding his life. "The Catholic press said for a week or two that he had been shot. Afterwards it was reported that he had turned up in Rome. And the Catholic press never told of how the Catalan Government protected the Bishop, priests and nuns, and gave them personal security," although this same Bishop, at the election, had ordered "a three-days' prayer by the whole of the Catholic people for the return of the Fascist right wing."

* * *

In face of all this, McGovern asks, "Could religion be prostituted further?" One old banker said to him, "My heart bleeds for the way my religion has been prostituted for material gain and political dominion." For "the people were not against religion." McGovern goes to great trouble to protect Catholicism. "Many to whom I spoke said that their religion was as strong as ever, but that it had been abused by the clergy." This is supported by a priest who is quoted as saying, "Why did the people desert the Church? Don't blame it on Russian propaganda. Nobody had better means of propaganda than we had. . . . It was because the people saw the church's union with the political bosses. Why were there two chapels in the religious schools, one for the poor children and the other for the rich? We cannot do less than protest when millions of pesetas are discovered in the palaces of the Bishops, while the poor perish of hunger, beg alms; or go to gather the leavings of the meals in the barracks. . . . The hatred of the people is not directed at God nor at the Church; it is turned towards their ministers."

This is precisely the view of Mr. McGovern. "I say to Catholics that I am prepared to respect the clergy when they confine themselves to spiritual and moral teaching."

That is, he intends to do his share towards perpetuating the mass mentality which gives the Roman Catholic Church its power—power which is primarily psychological so that it can always be translated to political and economic. Destroy that political and economic power in one generation, and you are still left with that psychological dominance which will enslave the next. But destroy the psychological influence and you have deprived the Church of its life-blood. There is, if an economic, also a cultural struggle.

According to McGovern, when the Spanish workers have got rid of their clerical bosses, they are to permit their children's minds to be moulded by other clerical bosses, in a way whose influence can be seen in the history of Spain—and so the game goes on. If Mr. McGovern really understood Catholicism, he would not raise his hands in dismayed anguish at the way it acts. He would expect it to act so.

He attacks his fellow-religionists because they abuse his religion. He should attack his religion for abusing his fellows.

G. H. TAYLOR.

We claim, and we shall wrest from theology, the entire domain of cosmological theory.—John Tyndall.

Where Stands Christianity?

III.

It must be a very bitter pill for Christians to swallow when they have to admit, not so much that "infidels" were right, as that the despised Jews were right. For, if there is one thing that the Jews have always protested against, it is the Virgin Birth. They would never admit that the Messiah, whom they believed was to come to "save" them, or deliver them in some way, was the actual son of their God; and certainly they would never agree to such a piece of fantastic nonsense as that a woman could give birth to a child in any other way than the usual one. The Jews who were very jealous of their religion ridiculed the Pagan gods and most of the stories connected with them; and, in particular, the stories of mythical deities who were born of virgins. And whatever else may be said for or against the Jews, it is a fact that the bitterest persecution never made them on the whole change their beliefs. The Jews, in fact, have always been a living challenge to the truth of the Christian faith; and one of the causes of Anti-Semitism surely is this fact.

The Virgin Birth story is by no means liked by the modern educated Christian theologian. Roman and Anglo-Catholics, together with the members of the Salvation Army and other extreme Protestant sects, naturally stick to the old belief; but the *Encyclopedia Biblica* was simply forced to give it up. In a long article on the "Nativity," the writer came to the conclusion:—

Thus for the whole birth—and childhood—story of Matthew in its every detail, it is possible to trace a pagan substratum. It must have arisen in Gentile Christian circles, probably in those of the province of Asia, and then it was to some extent legitimated by its narrator, in accordance with the tendency manifested throughout the whole of the First Gospel by citation of "prophetic" words in its support.

This is exactly what the Jews claimed for centuries, and what had been argued by Freethinkers for generations. The Modernist has been obliged to agree with both. The Rev. H. D. A. Major, for example, says in his *English Rationalism*:—

All those whose conception of the moral spiritual supremacy of Jesus is not based upon His being Virgin born can accept the conclusion of the critics that the Virgin Birth is a myth without being in the least affected in their hold on the Christian Faith.

What the "moral and spiritual" supremacy of Jesus would have done to make him "Our Lord" had he not been "born of a virgin," and the actual "Son of the living God," Mr. Major does not trouble to explain. Certain it is that Jesus would never have become the supreme Deity for his early worshippers that he did become, nor would Mr. Major and his like have accepted him as "Our Lord," had he been just a mere man. Thomas Paine saw this when he pointed out that to make him a God, Jesus had to be given both a Virgin Birth and a Resurrection.

And it ought to cause no surprise to find that the modern Christian writer is again forced to agree with a heretic like Paine. Dr. Percy Gardner, for instance, says in his *Exploratio Evangelica*:—

The tale of the physical resurrection of Jesus belongs evidently to the same circle of thought as that of the miraculous birth. This tale likewise rests on a historical substruction which falls to pieces on a careful examination.

One can see how much Christianity has changed when one of its professors can refer to such wondrous happenings as the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection as "tales," and contemptuously rejects even capital letters in writing about them.

The Roman Catholic theologians, however, still cling to the stories, and their defences are solemnly put forward as if there could be no possible answer. Mostly they rely on what "Our Lady" said to the "angel," or the "angel" to "Our Lady"; or on such texts as the one from Luke, "The angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary." Luke, in this way, settles the question for evermore; and the only thing that the Freethinker can do when faced with this kind of stupid "argument" is to shrug his shoulders and pass on. He can make use of his time to better effect in trying to make others Freethinkers.

If two such stupendous miracles as the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection are no longer believed in by those Christians who are obliged to agree with modern criticism, what about the other miracles of the Bible? Those in the Old Testament had been given up by many Christians long before those of the New had been questioned. Even the testimony of "Our Lord" could not vouch for something which was palpably against common sense, especially if there was a suspicion, or more than a mere suspicion, that this testimony was not "Our Lord's" at all but put into his mouth by a Gospel writer. The Rev. J. M. Thompson bluntly gives up all miracles. As he says in *Miracles of the New Testament*:—

The nearer we get to first-hand evidence, the weaker becomes the evidence for miracles. . . . The only case in which the question of miracles needs serious discussion is that of alleged wonders. We know of no natural laws, and we can conceive of no powers consistent with such laws, by which man could walk on water, or multiply bread, or restore the dead to life, in the way in which Jesus is stated to have done these things. . . . Either these events are miracles, or they never happened. The upshot of our inquiry is that they never happened.

Now if the Modern Christian really holds such views, then the gigantic hypocrisy and imposture of the historic Christian religion must be evident to all. How can one take away the miracles and the divine signs and wonders from the New Testament and still talk about "Our Lord"? He is only "Our Lord" if the miracles are true. Nobody gives divine worship to a man; and Jesus can be "Our Lord" only if the stories related of him are true in substance and in fact. The "proofs" of these things which have passed muster for centuries have broken down, says Dr. Major, "at the bar of historical and literary research and criticism," and never again can Christianity use them to prove she is of "divine" origin. Even such an orthodox and conservative critic as Dr. Sanday has had to admit, "As well bid the stream stop running, or the tree and the plant stop growing, as attempt to arrest and petrify the normal progressive movements of the human mind." And the progress of the human intellect has resulted in the drastic analysis of superstition, the greatest form of which is religion. Religion cannot, as a result, survive.

When our modern clergy are writing without fear or favour, they are obliged to admit this however sadly and reluctantly. Given a free pen, and no one writes much more drastically than Dr. Inge. He has said that "organized religion is certainly in retreat"; and he has been forced to say that the "conflict be-

tween science and religion is still a long way from being ended." To this he added, "It is difficult for a man to accept orthodox Christianity as the Churches present it to him without treachery to his scientific conscience." Admissions such as these cannot be very pleasant to anyone who still carries the Christian label. But they go to show that, however earnestly the Fundamentalists protest that God's Holy Word cannot change, the fact remains that it really is changing before their very eyes. We may never see the actual death of a religion, but we can see its transformation. And no one who has eyes to see can doubt for a moment that we are witnessing the transformation of Christianity.

H. CUTNER.

Orientalism and Medievalism

"EAST is east and west is west and never the twain shall meet." Western writers take it for granted that there is some intrinsic difference in the characters of European and Oriental people which shows itself in the laws and customs and institutions of the two sections of the world.

The Orientals are described as servile, fond of show and the splendours of pageantry, and only governable by force and fear, while, of course, the European is more restrained in his expression of pomp and power, and has a greater independence of thought and action.

This difference is not one of kind or degree but one of time. What we call Orientalism is the same thing as Medievalism. The difference is purely one of time and not of innate character. An Oriental would feel more at home in Medieval Europe than in the Europe of the present day. In Medieval Europe we had all the signs of so-called Orientalism: the despotism of kings and priests, and the slavery of the people.

Orientalism is another name for superstition. Christianity is an Oriental religion, but we are outgrowing it at present. Modern science and thought are not exclusively European, although some people would have us believe that it is entirely European, and it is impossible for Orientals to understand or apply it. Some say, for instance, that the Japanese are not a creative but an assimilative people, who suck up the knowledge gleaned by Europeans, and are therefore dependent on Europe for the supply of fresh ideas.

It must be remembered that Japan has been so busy acquiring European knowledge that she has not had time or energy yet to carry out original research. Which is just as true of India, China, and Arabia. Those countries are rapidly being "Europeanized," and will soon be supplying their quota to the world's wealth of science—as they have, indeed, already begun in a small way to give. Independence of mind—Freethought in its widest sense—is the mark not of a particular people, but of one particular stage of development. Europe happens to be more advanced than the Orient at present; at one time China led the world; at another, Arabia; and now these countries are catching up.

What is happening in China to-day? Asia has been brought into the orbit of world trade and commerce. One Asiatic power, Japan, has equipped itself with modern machinery of a highly technical industry, and with the necessity of using that industry, it is forced to follow the lead of the European powers and expand in search of markets and colonies.

China itself is also becoming modernized. But in so vast a country, it is impossible to progress at a very fast rate. So far, only the surface has been scratched. There are a few centre points of industry, Shanghai, Nanking, etc., but the rest of the country is still medieval.

It is one of the ironies of history that China, which invented gunpowder, should be subjected to these humiliations by barbarous invaders. The Japanese guns

are a directly evolutionary product of the first guns introduced into Europe from the Chinese.

But where the Chinese used this invention for purposes of display and harmless amusement, the Europeans saw nothing in it but a better method of killing their enemies. The European artificers bent their energies to improving and enlarging these engines of destruction, and the Chinese saw in gunpowder only a material for making fire-works.

Printing is another invention that owes a lot to the Chinese. Printing itself is an obvious device; it is a modification of the seals which had been used for thousands of years by the Egyptians, Babylonians, etc. It is the invention of paper which made printing possible on an extensive scale. Paper was introduced from China, by the Arabs, who captured some paper-makers from the Turks. Thus Europe again had the benefit of a Chinese invention.

Printing made the distribution of knowledge easy and cheap. But knowledge is not always a good thing, especially knowledge that gives power over material things. Unless that knowledge is wielded with wisdom and tolerance it becomes a source of terrible consequences. The Europeans used their power to kill and plunder all over the world.

Anatole France once wrote about the "Yellow Peril," "Asia has been familiar with the White Peril for years." The Yellow Peril is not troubling the white man, but the yellow, the Chinese.

The Japanese constitute the only peril, plain or coloured, for the Chinese. With the war-cry of "Asia for the Asiatics," which means in this case, "China for the Japanese," they are proceeding to bomb and destroy Chinese resistance to their conquests.

It is not done with European approval. When a joint European, American, and Japanese force went on a punitive expedition at the time of the Boxer riots, into China, that was all right. They were merely protecting their interests. But when Japan are not only protecting their own interests, but protecting China's from Europeans, it becomes all wrong, from Europe's point of view.

Europe agreed it was right to prevent China doing as she liked in her own country, and to teach her a salutary lesson now and again, as Britain had done in the person of Lord Elgin, destroying the wonderful Summer Palace, acres of beautiful ground and buildings—the act of a barbarian. This was quite all right, but taking everything for oneself—well, in the words of a great modern statesman, "it isn't done."

China has been learning her lesson in the last hundred years, and it has been a pretty senseless one. A lady in a book about China says that, when staying with some Chinese people, her hosts described how once a Chinese army had driven another army from the town. They told how the soldiers had shouted and fired their rifles into the air. When she expressed surprise at their firing their rifles into the air, they looked at her as if she had suggested something horrible. Did she think they ought to have fired at each other? The Chinese are learning it is necessary to fire into your enemy's body.

They are losing that sublime common-sense that formerly made soldiers put a placard on their backs saying, "Beware of me, I am brave." They are, as a European would put it euphemistically, "coming down to reality." They are learning to kill again. They are descending to the level of the barbarian. And as no one can foresee where that will end, so no one can tell where the Chinese race will be in a hundred years time. Perhaps the vassals of Japan or Europe, or perhaps the masters of the world!

IRIS ABRAHAM.

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC RELIGION

Horace Walpole, in his letters, mentions a sceptical *bon-vivant*, who, upon being urged to turn Roman Catholic, objected that it was a religion enjoining so many fasts, and requiring such implicit faith: "You give us," he observed, "too little to eat, and too much to swallow.—From *"The Tin Trumpet"* (1836).

Acid Drops

A *Daily Express* man has been making enquiries concerning the salaries of the clergy. He finds that most of them receive under £500 a year—which can hardly be called a starvation wage, even in these days of high prices. But to make a closer examination, he took three of the higher paid vicars and three of the lowest. The three highest on the list received £2,500, £3,700, and £2,616. They are evidently well-looking after. The three lowest received all very small livings, £100, £111 and £117. Enquiries, however, shed some light on the matter. One has an "extra" in the shape of a chaplaincy which brings his salary up to £500, another has a chaplaincy and rural deanery, and doesn't bother to take his salary as vicar, while the other gets a total of about £400 a year—counting in another "extra." This throws some light on the subject of parsonic salaries, official and actual.

We raise no objection to parsons being well-paid, any more than we object to other people being properly paid, by those who desire their services. We would have no objection to receive a reasonable salary as editor of the *Freethinker*, if it were possible. But it is not. But the Clerical profession is not the only profession in which there are poorly paid jobs. And while the parson who has a comparatively small salary wishes for more, he does not enter the profession to get a small salary, but in the vast majority of cases, in the hope of getting a big one. And it would be interesting to know, when one hears of the salaries of the "poor clergy," how many of them hold double or triple posts when the outside world hears only of one. There are a vast number of unadvertised "plums" in the clerical profession.

The *Church Times* protesting, as it has always done, against anti-semitism, calls it "unchristian." But if it is not Christian, what is it? It is Christians that have developed it, and kept it alive through the ages, and it certainly takes its roots in the feelings of Christians, used though it may be as a mask for other things. We cheerfully admit that always there have been Christians who have risen above it, but so have many Christians risen above their own doctrines. And the very worst feature of anti-semitism is that it is because of it that Judaism has been kept alive. Without the age-long persistent persecution of the Jew by Christians the Jewish religion would long since have died out. We would like to have from the *Church Times* an answer to the plain question—"If the persecution of the Jews is un-Christian, seeing that it has always been nourished and developed by Christians, what is it?" We have not great hopes of an answer. Such questions are usually ignored.

The *Church Times* says that while there has been no dramatic or impressive reply to the Archbishop's "Recall to Religion," yet "Church people are eager to avail themselves of the privileges of the Faith." That quite bears out what we said when the "Recall" was announced. There will be no impression whatever on the non-Christian population, but those who are already members of Church—and Chapel—will meet and report that they have had a glorious time, and the clergy will talk of the large number of converts gained. We know this manoeuvre very well. It is humbug from beginning to end. If it can save a few from leaving the Church it is as much as it can do. But as for saving the Church—it is Mrs. Partington and her broom all over again.

"Eventful Year in the Church," is the heading to a summary by the "Ecclesiastical Correspondent" of the *Daily Telegraph*, which, as an example of utter futility, is worthy to supplant the fable of the mountain's labour in bringing forth a mouse. Here are the "features" of the "eventful" 1937:—

- (1) Considerable progress was made by various movements for using the cinema in the cause of religion.
- (2) Convocation of Canterbury excited interest owing

to its debates on the Church's marriage law and the question of admitting divorced people to Holy Communion. No final conclusions were reached.

(3) The Church Assembly gave final approval to measures relating to misbehaviour, negligence, and incapacity of incumbents.

(4) The Tithe Act has thrown an immense burden on Queen Anne's bounty, necessitating certain calculations as to the "Government stock to be issued."

(5) Note is made that the Ecclesiastical Commissioners have built some new flats. They have also managed to adjust poor benefices so that "an average of more than £250 a year to each benefice assisted has been attained." [This should be noted against the "poor clergy" plea, which is perennial.]

(6) And finally: "Southwark Cathedral received a new constitution," the most important phase of which is the change from the title Dean to that of Provost!

Should any doubt that this is a correct summary of a year's "work" of the Church according to one who specializes on the subject, we refer them to the *Daily Telegraph* of December 29 last. Even so, we would quite understand continued doubt that this is a serious account of a year's "labours" of a vast organization controlling millions of pounds, and which "bleeds" the country for so many millions more annually. "How long, O man, how long?"

Mr. Herbert Morrison, M.P., Leader of the London Country Council, won a *Star* guinea with the following story:—

It was a great day for the Glasgow football enthusiasts—Celtic v. Rangers.

Somehow or another the Celtics have become identified with the Catholics and the Rangers with the Protestants. Partisan feeling for the respective teams runs high. One of the spectators, however, maintains a dead silence. He cheers neither the Celtics nor the Rangers. This is observed by his neighbour, and, being rather unusual, he is mystified.

At last he turns to the silent one and asks, "Are ye for the Celtics?"

"Naw."

"Then ye'll be for the Rangers."

"Naw."

The interrogator turns to his friend on the other side of him, cocks his thumb at the impartial figure, and whispers fiercely, "he is a bloody Atheist."

We have taken the liberty of printing the naughty word in full.

If a man be known by the company he keeps, the Spanish rebel, Franco, is doubly damned. Lacking water, food, and munitions; seeing women and children die purposelessly of wounds or starvation; and convinced of the failure of Franco's boasted relief, Colonel Rey d'Harcourt, in command at Teruel, made submission to the Spanish Government forces. Whereupon, Franco's "Radio-General," Quelpo de Llano, from the safety and ease of his broadcasting quarters, vilifies his "brothers-in-arms" in words sufficient to make the most savage dictator envious. The unsuccessful defenders of Teruel are "traitors," "inept and cowardly," and altogether "unworthy scum." But this thing that goes by the name of de Llano reaches the height of martial carpet-bombast with the following:—

That miserable chief (Colonel Rey d'Harcourt) surrendered without consulting his superior and committed one of the greatest of military crimes, which will be paid for, because God is just and will have him assassinated by the Reds or shot by a firing squad.

These rebels have, obviously, a God after their own heart, and their religious supporters and sympathizers should feel that his "defence" has fallen into just the right hands.

Next month's Church Assembly will "face" the question of whether the not always "Holy" state of matrimony is good enough for the clergy. Lords Halifax and Cecil regard the priesthood as involving perfect "celibacy." The *Daily Herald* is probably right in suggesting that the real object is to get a cheaper priesthood. It is

overlooked that Jesus Christ Himself (Mat. xix.) laid down the law that not only priests but all mankind might be emasculated for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake if they could bring themselves to do it ("He that is able to receive it, let him receive it").

A writer in the *Observer* deplores the "silly craze" of writing the Lord's Prayer on a threepenny bit. He seems to regard it as "a kind of blasphemy to use sacred words for so trivial a purpose." This gentleman should remember that mankind has suffered the most atrocious crimes, inspired by "sacred words" used with the utmost seriousness and reverence. Besides this, some of the Bible is really funny: the word "trivial" is too mild a term to apply to such "sacred words" as Isaiah vii. 20, which describes "The Lord" shaving "with a razor that is hired." The story of Jonah and the Whale, the details of "Noah's Ark" construction, and the extraordinary army of dry bones referred to in Ezekiel xxxvii. are sheer comedy or absolute farce.

Mr. Somerset Maugham has caused a commotion by saying that King James' Bible has been a harmful influence on English literature. We are not so certain of the truth of this, although we welcome it as a protest against the widely-spread nonsense talked about the English Bible being a source of inspiration to English writers, and a "well of English undefiled." For the first it need only be said that any book enjoying a prominent place among a people is bound to exert an influence on some writers. But the place of the Bible was not made in England because of its English any more than the bones of a Christian saint were treasured because of their strength. Both are fetishistic objects, and when that is said everything is said.

And, for the second plea we need only point out once more that the Bible is not a form of English that was either written or spoken by the English people or by English writers. We defy anyone to pick out in any of the Elizabethan writers an English that resembles the English of the Bible. Those who talk so much of the Bible as having a profound influence on the great English writers are just talking popular nonsense. If they had a real ear for what they read they could not talk such complete nonsense.

Dr. Campbell Morgan, writing to the *News-Chronicle*, says "Our whole English tongue at its best has been built up on the translation from the Hebrew," which is an expression that only a really ignorant man could make. Mr. Robert Lynd, who ought to know better, writes that Mr. Maugham's statement seems like saying that Christianity had a damaging effect on European architecture. Well, that is exactly what John Ruskin said had been the effect of Christianity on architecture. The Church took its ideas from other forms of architecture and coarsened them in the application. Mr. Lynd also says Mr. Maugham suggests that without our English Bible,

all the writers of genius, from Milton and Bunyan down to Stevenson and Kipling would have written greater works than we now possess.

It means nothing of the kind. The question here is not whether the writers that followed the 1611 issue of the Bible used Bible language, but whether they would have written worse without the English Bible than they did with it? Naturally every writer is affected by the literature around him. The question is whether his power and style is vitally dependent upon a particular literature. It is certain that the Elizabethan writers were not in the least dependent upon the 1611 Bible. And if Shakespeare, and Sidney, and Ben Jonson, and others could have flourished and given us the "golden Age of English Literature" without the Bible, on what ground is it held that they who came after them could not have done good work had the Bible not been in existence. The truth is that few of our writers to-day have the courage

to speak honestly on the subject. Mr. Maugham has let out a substantial truth, and the timid or stupid, or interested do not like it.

The Lord Chancellor has been making an appeal to aged J.P.'s to retire from the Bench. The advice seems to us to be quite sound. But we also wish the Lord Chancellor would pay some attention to those magistrates and coroners who so often deny a man his legal rights because they do not happen to agree with his religious opinions. We take the following from the *Liverpool Daily Post* of January 11:—

At an inquest at Wigan yesterday a juror refused to take the oath on the Testament and he was instantly discharged by the Wigan Borough Coroner (Mr. J. Hopwood Sayer). The inquest was held up for five minutes while a new juror was found.

The Coroner said he had never before known of a juror to refuse to take the oath, though he had known witnesses to do so.

Whether the man is a juror or a witness has nothing to do with the matter. Under the Oaths Amendment Act every man or woman has the right to affirm in all circumstances where an oath is usually demanded. The Judge or Coroner has the right to ask but one question. "On what grounds, and the answer may take one of two forms on the ground of having "no religious belief," or on the ground of "It is contrary to my religious belief." Any further questioning should be declined, and any further comment on the part of the judge or coroner is a piece of impertinence. It is time that a stop was put to this setting of the law at defiance by those who are given its administration. We suggest that the rejected juror calls the attention of his representative in the House of Commons to his treatment. A question might be asked.

According to Canon Frank Paton Williams the Englishman loves his beer and his Bible. We may take the Canon's word for it, but we undertake to say that the Englishman would miss his bottle much more than he would miss his Bible. The price of beer goes up, but it is still bought. The price of the Bible is reduced so that it may be bought, and even then a considerable number of copies has to be given away. "Come and have a drink" is an invitation to jollity and a sign of good-fellowship. "Come and let us read the Bible together" is a suggestion that would cast a gloom over any gathering.

Roses decked the cathedral of Athens when the 36-year-old Crown Prince Paul of Greece was married to 20-year-old Princess Frederika of Brunswick, granddaughter of the ex-Kaiser and great-granddaughter of Queen Victoria. The ceremony was attended by King George of Greece, 55 European princes and princesses (including the Duke and Duchess of Kent). Six princesses in pink held the bride's long train; three princes were the best men—Crown Prince Michael of Rumania, Prince George of Greece and Prince Oscar of Prussia. Was there anyone else there? Yes, FORTY BISHOPS! No one will be able to say that the foundations of this marriage have not been well and truly laid.

Fifty Years Ago

MR. GLADSTONE is too ardent a lover of the immortal literature of Greece to listen to the uncritical enlogists of the Jewish Scriptures. To his mind the Hebrew literature is "absolutely incommensurable with the literature of other lands." Yet he regards the Jewish writers as the spiritual centre of humanity before the Christian era. But as the Jewish language, in which God spoke through Moses and the prophets, was a very imperfect one, how providential it was the Greek language was fashioned for the propagation of Christianity and the elaboration of its subtle dogmas! "I suppose," says Mr. Gladstone, "it to be a question still open among the learned whether, and in what degree, the Saviour himself employed it in his ministry." I suppose! Yes, Mr. Gladstone, you do suppose.

The Freethinker, January 22, 1888.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

To Circulating and distributing the *Freethinker*.—I. Yettram, 58.; Don Fisher, 48.

S. MORTON.—Pleased you have found the *Age of Reason* so useful. We know of no work that proves quite so effective in interesting a Christian in the Freethought movement. No book is so well calculated to lead to further enquiries.

J. HARVEY AND T. M. MOSLEY.—Thanks for addresses of likely new readers; paper being sent.

W. H. NELMES.—Thanks. Will be used.

J. R. PALSER.—Thanks for letter. Will look up the matter and deal with it next week.

C. HARPER.—The authors of the *Bible Handbook* are both dead. But we imagine they referred to the religious purpose for which circumcision was imposed, and not the occasion for a surgical operation.

RATHMELL WILSON.—Next week. Crowded out of this issue.

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.

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

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

Sugar Plums

This issue of the *Freethinker* although dated Sunday, January 23, will be in the hands of most of its readers by Friday evening, January 21. We therefore take the opportunity of reminding all who will be present at the Annual Dinner at the Holborn Restaurant on Saturday evening, Jan. 22, that there will be a reception at 6.30. Above all, as there is a lengthy programme, musical and oratorical, to work through, dinner will be served promptly at seven. A chart showing each person his or her place at the tables will be shown in the reception room.

The six articles of Mr. Cohen's dealing with the Coronation Service, its anthropological and social significance, roused a great deal of attention both in this country and out of it. *Reason*, the organ of the Rationalist Association of India, has reprinted the whole of the six articles as a supplement to its January issue. The reprint covers twenty-two pages, double-column. The Pioneer Press has received a limited supply from India, and these are on sale at threepenny per copy, by post fourpence. Those who wish for copies must send for them as soon as possible. Although issued for the Coronation the interest of the articles does not lie wholly in that ceremony. It is really an essay on Kingship, its religious origin and sociological reactions. More than one outsider paid us the compliment of saying that no paper but the *Freethinker* would have published such a series at such a time.

In the present issue we print a contribution from Mr. Bayard Simmons. This makes the hundredth poem that Mr. Simmons has written for the *Freethinker*. We congratulate both him and our readers on achieving his first century. We hope he will be with us long enough to complete another.

The Rationalist Association of India held its Annual General Meeting on January 9. We have not, of course, received a report of its proceedings, but Mr. Cohen, as President of the N.S.S., was asked to write a letter to the meeting. He did so, and a reprint of it appears in the organ of the Association, *Reason*. We reprint it here, as likely to be of interest to our readers:—

To the President of the R.A.I.,

Dear Sir,—May I, on behalf of the National Secular Society, offer my congratulations on your Congress, and also my best wishes on your success. All over the world the fight that Freethought is waging against superstition and social injustice is of the same texture, however different it may be in form. It is a work that calls for an expression of the best in man, requiring strong conviction, a type of moral courage not common, and an intellectual clarity still more uncommon. In India you have your special difficulties, as we have ours, and in the near future these difficulties promise to increase rather than to diminish.

But whatever the difficulties may be, we can all fight on, comforted by the conviction that while the enthroned power of superstition and injustice may conquer for awhile, no form of tyranny or superstition has ever found itself able to permanently check the development of Freethought and the impetus of accumulated knowledge.

Nothing would have given me greater pleasure than to have delivered this message in person. I have long had a desire to visit India, but I question whether I shall ever be able to leave my work for a period lengthy enough to satisfy my ambition.

With every appreciation of the courage with which our Indian brethren are meeting the special difficulties of their position, I remain,

Yours faithfully,

CHAPMAN COHEN,

President, National Secular Society.

We have been told there is a soul of goodness in all things evil, and Mr. Cohen's meeting in the Stratford Town Hall on Sunday last might be taken as proof of the adage. It was a vile night, and the weather must have prevented many coming from a distance, and who might have been unable to get into the hall. As it was the hall was filled. A satisfactory feature of the meeting was the large proportion of young people, of both sexes, and who appeared thoroughly to enjoy the lecture. It was enough to make any parson weep. There was also a good sale of literature, there being quite a run on the *Pamphlets for the People*. Mr. Dowson occupied the chair, and managed his job well. There were a number of questions at the conclusion of the lecture.

The bad weather was the same at Birkenhead as elsewhere, and it is good news that Mr. Rosetti had a good meeting there also, and the lecture on "Dictators, People and Persecution," was thoroughly appreciated. Across the river, at Liverpool, Mr. Brighton was also lecturing, but we have had no report of his meeting. We should, however, be surprised if the audience was not well satisfied with it.

The *Freethinker* for 1937, strongly bound in cloth, gilt lettered, and with title page, will be ready in a few days. Those who require this volume should send their orders as soon as possible, as the demand has been steadily increasing of late years, and, in order to avoid disappointments, it is necessary to know the number of intending purchasers in advance. The year is a particularly interesting one owing to the occurrences of public importance such as the Paine Bicentenary, the Abdication, and the Coronation, all of which received lengthy and particular treatment in our columns. Orders will be executed in rotation. The price is 17s. 6d., plus 1s. postage.

We pointed out some weeks ago that the Chinese are in one direction suffering from being more civilized than are the peoples of the West. They have always preached the virtues of peace, and have not used the preaching as a cloak for war-like enterprises. So we are pleased to see the following in the editorial column of the *Daily Express*:—

A very great race are the Chinese, old in culture, wise, patient, with the calm bravery that is associated with women rather than men. A race that is highly respected even if not very far advanced in the mechanical knowledge that we sometimes mistake for progress.

The habits of the Chinese are not ours. They don't believe in pills, for a start, and in fact our Western civilization in many ways makes no impression on them. It is chiefly in our barbaric acts, faithfully copied by the Japs, that we are superior to the Chinese.

The *Freethinker* appears to be getting into a number of new hands lately. This is as it should be, and we are obliged to those who are helping in the good work. We know of these new readers mainly from the letters we receive. Some are very flattering, others are—amusing. For instance, on one day last week we received three letters, each of which betokened considerable temper. Opinions were divided into two sorts. One of them decided I was a rogue with an uneasy conscience. Another agreed that I was a rogue, but said nothing about an uneasy conscience. The third decided that I was a lost soul living in darkness, but that if I would only come “humbly to Christ” there was yet time. I hope these three will keep an eye on us and watch—themselves. They will not be the first that have come to curse, and stayed to bless.

Mr. Don Fisher writes:—

It was never more needed that the circle of our readers should be extended to embrace all Freethinkers. A wide and early return to sanity will be necessary to maintain the happiness, peace and good-will that is still with most of the inhabitants of these islands. The weekly tonic you administer will effect a cure for some of the ailing, and I hope that we shall be able to treat those who still suffer with toleration and gentle enlightenment.

The Student and Historian of Primitive Culture

ALTHOUGH the problem of man's place in Nature appealed to the minds of supermen such as Herodotus and Lucrétius in Pagan times, the same views then enunciated were lost in the darkness of later Christian centuries. With the revival of ancient culture, that versatile genius, Leonardo, propounded sound doctrine concerning the vestiges of extinct life preserved in the rocks, but no real science relating to human evolution from lower forms of life, or any positive proof of man's great antiquity or of the phases of social, industrial and religious development he has passed through in his onward advance, was attained until recent times.

Multitudinous are the workers who now pursue inquiries into archaeology, ethnology and kindred sciences. But men of old renown who were the modern pioneers in these fertile fields must not be neglected and pre-eminent among these stands Edward Burnett Tylor. For to his painstaking pioneer investigations presented in his *Researches into the Early History of Mankind, Primitive Culture*, and other invaluable publications all his co-workers and successors remain deeply indebted.

Like many other distinguished men, such as Lister and Herbert Spencer, Tylor was of Quaker descent. Denied university training owing to the religious tests then imposed, Tylor, notwithstanding, lived to become an Oxford professor. In his estimable monograph, *Tylor* (Chapman and Hall), the Rector of Exeter College, Dr. Marett, personally acquainted with his subject, recalls the circumstance that: “Tylor in conversation at Oxford would laughingly boast

that he had never sat for an examination in his life and arrived at a professorship nevertheless.”

Almost adventitiously, Tylor entered the realm he was destined to adorn. Henry Christy was another Quaker who was keenly interested in human origins, and in his company Tylor travelled in America, and it was amid the mournful ruins of Mexican architecture that he served his early apprenticeship. In 1858 these relics of a great civilization so ruthlessly destroyed by the Catholic Spanish invaders made an indelible impression on his mind. The youthful observer was intensely astonished to discover the striking resemblances of the architecture and theology of Central America to those of the Old World.

In the first child of his invention, his fascinating work, *Anahuac* (1861), he provisionally concluded that: “On the whole, the most probable view of the origin of the Mexican tribes seems to be the one ordinarily held, that they really came from the Old World, bringing with them several legends, evidently the same as those recorded in the Book of Genesis.” They were then, he surmised, mere nomads, and their civilization was of much later growth. Yet, he is perplexed to note so many utilities anciently widespread in Europe and Asia as well as in Africa entirely unknown in America. The deficiencies manifest in Mexico appeared completely incompatible with any recent contact with the Eastern Hemisphere. Indeed, the Aztecs were unacquainted with the proper manner of attaching a handle to a stone hammer, and although lingering in the Bronze Period, they had never applied this alloy “to the making of such things as knives and spear-heads. They had no beasts of burden; though there were animals in the country which they might probably have domesticated and milked, they had no idea of anything of the kind.” Nor were they aware that wax and oil were useful as illuminants, and they possessed no weighing appliances. Tylor therefore decides that until fuller knowledge is available no definite conclusion can be formed concerning their earlier history.

The Mexican journey with the observations and meditations it occasioned proved, as Dr. Marett remarks, “a prelude to a life's devotion to an evolutionary science of man. Taught by Christy to appreciate the rich diversity of human achievement on its material side, Tylor was soon of his own accord to look beyond the body to the soul of the cultural process—in other words, to seek to determine the nature and growth of the racial intelligence.”

Tylor naturally regarded language as a purely native product. Gesture probably preceded complete articulation for the obvious reason that primitives could convey their thoughts and requirements much more easily by means of signs than through speech. Having mastered all that had been published on the subject, Tylor, not satisfied with this, repaired to Berlin, whose Deaf and Dumb Institution utilized a system in which some 5,000 signs were employed. With the aid of these “a habit of wordless, yet perfectly effective talking and thinking, was successfully taught and acquired.” Various signs were introduced by preceptors who themselves possessed the faculty of speech and the use of these artificial finger-signs was taught to the afflicted inmates. But it became noticeable that the deaf and dumb disregarded these artificial signs in their ordinary conversation, and it was observed when they were left to themselves they would ignore them altogether. Indeed, the unaided natural gesture-language was seen to be “quite capable of developing an effective means of communication with one another out of their own minds, and without the intervention of speaking men.” And it is certainly significant that purely natural language-signs of this character are practically uniform in every part of the

globe. It is not for a moment contended that there was ever a period in human history when sounds and grimaces were not used to convey information, ideas or emotions, or that the voice was not made more expressive by reverential, disdainful or other attitudes accompanying it. Yet, while gesture alone is remarkably efficient for purposes of communication, Tylor distinctly states that: "The idea that gesture-language represents a distinct separate stage of human utterance, through which Man passed before he came to speak, has no support from facts."

In tracing the genesis and development of religion from the misconceptions of natural phenomena entertained by aboriginal mankind, Tylor surveys every aspect of supernaturalism. The beliefs and observances of savage life survive, he says, "within the limits of modern Christendom." Prayers serve for inspiring courage and heartening hope, but what he terms "matter of fact prayers" are of little consequence. Still, he notes that: "Throughout the rituals of Christendom stand an endless array of suppositions unaltered in principle from savage times—that the weather may be adjusted to our local needs, that we may have the victory over all our enemies, and that life, health, wealth, and happiness may be ours."

The arts of the diviner in all their varied aspects, Tylor dismisses as contrary to common sense. The pseudo-science, astrology, is unworthy of serious notice, but his most pitiless scorn is reserved for what Tyndall once described as the intellectual whoredom of spiritualism. Dr. Marett, influenced as he is by *mana* and Oxord's traditional adherence to forsaken beliefs, nevertheless admits that, "as Tylor shows at length the modern spiritualist displays a *modus operandi* that bears a remarkably close resemblance to that of the old-fashioned medicine-man."

A few centuries ago, the witchcraft mania led to terrible results, and in *Primitive Culture*, Tylor pictures the epidemic of spookism of recent decades as a morbid survival from a superstitious and blood-stained past. This disease, like an intermittent fever, has revived in its earlier virulence. "Modern spiritualism as every ethnographer may know, is pure and simple savagery both in its theory and the tricks by which it is supported."

In his *Pathology of Mind*, Dr. Maudsley notes that the morbid and even pathological manifestations of spiritualism closely suggest those met with among the mentally deranged. Speaking as a specialist in the treatment and cure of insanity of world-wide reputation, when he referred to spiritualists, he stated "that many of them, especially the most eager and intense among them, have the neurotic temperament, which goes along with epilepsy or insanity, or other allied nervous diseases in the family." And in a footnote to his *Pathology*, p. 80, Dr. Maudsley points out that in the London Dialectical Society's *Report on Spiritualism* the following passage occurs: "Of the comparatively small number of persons who were conspicuous either as advocates or 'mediums,' one became the subject of well-marked mental illness, and another had to be confined in a lunatic asylum. A third person, who was an eager member of one of the sub-committees, was seized with a mysterious form of paralysis, although comparatively a young man."

Even among peoples of the lower culture evidences of insanity are apparent, especially among the more ecstatic tribal mediums. Sir Edward Tylor was firmly convinced in consequence of his protracted studies that illusion and hallucination combined with the absence of any logical conception of natural causation were mainly responsible for primitive misconceptions, as they still very largely remain with the necromancing and ghost-seeking devotees of the dark arts of our own time.

A man of magnificent appearance who lived to the age of eighty-four, he was very happily married and he and his charming wife, who survived him, spent sixty years together. Not only as writer but as lecturer on anthropological themes Tylor was a far-famed man. Dr. Marett tells one good story concerning an address Tylor delivered at the Royal Institution when he unsuccessfully tried to illustrate the working of the primitive fire-drill. In the damp atmosphere the expected spark failed to appear and the lecturer seemed somewhat disconcerted. Then writes Marett: "Tyndall, who was there, offered to take on the duty, so that the discourse might continue. Instantly, fire flared up, and the audience applauded 'But Tyndall,' said Tylor afterwards, 'I don't understand; you should have produced no more than a spark.' 'I'm afraid,' was the reply, 'that I added the head of a lucifer match, just to cheer the thing up!'"

T. F. PALMER.

Spiritism and Spiritualism

It is usual to treat these words as synonymous, and therefore interchangeable. Here, however, we shall find it convenient to restrict "Spiritualism" to the quasi-religion bearing that name. When, where, or how, dawn-men first came to leave the highroad of Naturalism—i.e., the investigation and classification of their sense-impressions—and start the human family on a (still rampant) wild-goose chase after a phantom entity ("Spirit"): these are questions which may never be fully answered. At times, "the pity of it!" gets the better of our judgment, and we remember neither "our mother's people," nor the imperishable lines of the beloved Omar:—

"The Moving Finger writes, and having writ
Moves on: nor all your Piety and Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all your Tears wash out a word of it."

For instance, while discussing pre-history with a beautiful young Russian Jewess—intellectual, cultured, accomplished, and (reputed) "emancipated"—we rashly remarked on the sheer ill-luck that led men to create, out of nothing more substantial than their disordered imaginations, a source of human misery and death far more potent than the wars, pestilences and famines, etc., which arose inevitably from their environments. "Not at all," replied the serene and softly-modulated voice "for those who recognize that religion is as inevitable as war and famine, and no more of a *mauvais pas* than they; or for those who can understand the meaning of duty, and beauty of sacrifice!" Here were two fatal "punches," constituting a "knock-out." We were quite unable to rise when "time" was called. The first punch got home on Omar's lines; but the second? Our collapse was due to the sudden startling realization that here and now, in the full daylight of twentieth century culture, we have among us a probaby numerous class of minds in *perfect sympathetic accord* with those terrible ancestors of ours who, during an almost "astronomic" era of time, drenched the earth with the blood of "human sacrifices"!

Spiritism, then, had to come; but why—Oh why—should it remain? It is unthinkable that educated men to-day—had that early blunder never been made—would see in the "psychic" anything more than a process analogous to the flowering of the plant. The flower dies with the plant; but just as its perfume can "live" on indefinitely in the leaves of an album, so the thoughts of a dead man can long survive in paper

or stone. That either the perfume or the thoughts continue to "live" in the sense in which the highly-organized plant and man once "lived," is a proposition which would never be entertained, but for the original *faux pas*.

Once again, however, we must give up speculation on the "might-have-beens," and face the fact—as well as the inevitability of it—that the great majority of the human race still believe in a detachable soul. Against this popular dualism, the great monist philosophies—whether Idealist or Materialist—preach to little effect. The former conserves, so far as possible, by a lavish employment of the methods of "special pleading," the ideas "God, the Soul, and Immortality." It gets rid of dualism by jettisoning "matter," but only persuades the unintellectual to acquiesce in this sacrifice, when the whole philosophy has been mauled, muddled, and degraded to the level of a quack medicine by a Mrs. Eddy. Materialism, on the other hand, in close alliance with Science, and the scientific doctrine of Evolution (even this is now dubiously challenged by the Idealist exponents of the Relativity Theory)—i.e., a "one-way" time process exhibiting the progressive development of unorganized or slightly organized matter into highly organized matter, living matter, brain, with environment—Materialism, we say, has rather better chances than Idealism with the hereditary dualists and plain men.

In particular, it invites disproof of its triumphant formula: "No soul without living brain," and this challenge is at once taken up by the Spiritualists, whose views we must now briefly consider. The voluminous evidence they offer for the continued existence and activities of departed souls cannot be examined here. Some of it establishes a good *prima facie* case for the occurrence of remarkable phenomena not yet fully amenable to scientific "explanation." For the rest, it affords no proof whatever to scientifically-trained minds (other than those of Sir Oliver Lodge and a handful of thinkers of various nationalities) for its main thesis as stated above.

We write from memory only, and therefore subject to correction, but we believe that Sir Oliver has propounded a theory, worthy of Pythagoras himself, which begins by positing, somewhere outside of Space and Time a Personality existing in its own spiritual right, from which a small portion is detached and placed within Space and Time, where it becomes the "soul" of a new-born babe. After the decease of its host, this soul rejoins the parent Personality.

The following are among the difficulties which obtrude themselves when we try to fit this theory to the facts:—

(1) We are assured, on good medical authority, that the newborn infant has *no soul*. At what point in its career does the "Soul" appear?

(2) When the "Soul" has "joined up" (if this occurs as we must suppose in very early life) it must be a *tabula rasa*, and will have *to grow*. Yet we may reasonably expect even a *portion* of a greater Personality to be something more than a *tabula rasa*.

(3) A perfectly satisfactory scientific description of the child's development can be furnished; and would be in no way altered or improved by the introduction of an impossible quantity such as *x over the root of -1*—"a soul."

(4) If it be the *métier* of a "soul" to *grow*; if, accordingly, both portions of the Personality do grow during the interval before reunion, they are likely to become so highly differentiated by the dissimilar characters of the two environments, that they will be unsympathetic or antagonistic to one another.

(5) The original whole Personality must be pre-

sumed to be in Heaven, or at all events not "Elsewhere." If the detached portion happens to develop on wrong lines, and is fit only for "Elsewhere" (after the death of its host by hanging) how and where does the postulated reunion take place?

(6) In such a case, which entity are we to associate with the spirit-photograph—the one in Heaven, the one "Elsewhere," or a compound of the two, existing in some intermediate locality—say Purgatory?

It may well be that we haven't got all the details of this remarkable theorem right, and also that no such theorem is generally maintained by the Spiritualists; for unquestionably there is a very materializing aspect of this "faith." Disembodied spirits appear in *clothes*; we hear of *bodies*, and even of *whisky* and *cigars*, made of *Ether*. Should the Ether survive the *hari kari* operation lately performed upon it by Relativity Theory, and become reincarnate, we see no reason why the Spiritualists should not repaint their whole picture of the Cosmos (things, bodies, souls, heaven and hell, all in) in the colours of Materialism; just as, we may suppose, did the earliest Greek philosophers.

In conclusion, we must show due and proper humility by the admission that Science is still in her infancy, and that "there are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio. . . ." In particular, we must concede that Psychology is still in the *first* costume of Cinderella. The point which we wish to emphasize here is just this: Social life to-day provides more than enough of difficulty, confusion, and complexity for "such men as the earth now produces." If effective continuous communication could ever be established between ourselves and the countless myriads of the dead, would life be worth living? The Egyptians, indeed, could manage to run a "City of the Dead"; but then the dead did not talk! Even conversations with the Martians might have their drawbacks; but that the industrious wife should be continuously admonished by her deceased mother-in-law on the making of a rice-pudding. . . ! No, no, this would never do!

G. TODHUNTER.

Aloof

RECLINING on a shallow river bank,
And listening to the murmuring cadence of the stream,
O'ercome by sleep, I into slumber sank;
I slept and dreamed a dream.

I dreamed the river spoke with me and said,
Like you, dear youth, I shall be one day dead.
My watery atomies, which nourish life
In cress, and fish, and tiny snails,
Will be absorbed in that vast tumbling strife,
Old Father Sea, the habitat of whales.
All my sweet waters will become
Salt and full bitter like a wasted land;
And through the ocean bear the proud white sails
Of lawful commerce, many a pirate band
Of vilest humans keep
Their baleful watch upon the heaving deep.

But you, dear youth, when Nature shall dissolve
Your firm white flesh in woeful dank decay,
Will know no second life; you cease to be.
Not yours to mingle when life slips away;
Therefore I urge you highly to resolve,
That as you cannot enter in a sea,
Can never be absorbed, you will give thanks and praise
To the high gods who fix our span of days,
That man's life ends in sleep,
Final and perfect, dreamless, aloof, and deep.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

Belief and Practice

SMITH: "What are your views of Christianity?"

Robinson: "I have many, but the one that impresses me most is the immeasurable gap between what its adherents profess and what they practice. I have yet to meet one who could be said, even half-heartedly, to comply with all their master's commands."

S.: "Is that not because many are incapable of fulfilment by rational human beings?"

R.: "Probably it is. Another of my impressions is the inconsistency displayed by Christians in other ways. The bombing of open towns appears to cause them great distress. At public meetings and in the press Ministers of religion, and others, describe those responsible for the bombing as human fiends, yet the same people claim that although their God has condemned the majority of souls to eternal and indescribable torture, he is, nevertheless, loving, merciful and just. I do not blame them for condemning the bombing, but their sycophantic adulation of the Architect of Hell bewilders me. If this abomination had been designed by the Devil, how they would have execrated him."

S.: "You must have noticed the inconsistency of Christianity in its attitude towards the other great religions. The vast majority of its followers know absolutely nothing about these religions, very few, indeed, of them having studied their sacred writings, yet they reject them with contempt. It is sufficient for them to know that their leaders say that Christianity is the one and only true religion. They appear themselves incapable of serious reasoning."

R.: "It is characteristic of all religions that each is satisfied that the rest are deluded. An inconsistency on the part of Christians which has often surprised me, is their insistence upon the observance of certain commands in the Bible, while at the same time disregarding others which are equally explicit. We hear a lot about what the Bible says concerning divorce and how essential it is that we should obey its commands on this subject, albeit by doing so human happiness is impaired, and immorality encouraged, but we hear little or nothing about such injunctions as turning the other cheek, taking no heed for the morrow, and so on. Presumably you have often seen the familiar legend "God is love" exhibited in Christian homes. I am sure their owners would not entertain for a moment the idea of substituting it for one announcing that "God is a consuming fire," yet the same authority—the Bible—is responsible for both statements. Christians recognize only those teachings of the Bible which appeal to their imagination."

S.: "Whenever a disaster occurs involving the loss of lives, Christians invariably describe it an act of mercy on the part of the Lord if there are any survivors. They never condemn him for allowing the calamity. When singing their childish hymns, they lay great stress upon their desire to be with the Lord—and send for the doctor immediately they are taken ill. Despite their hymnic asseverations they display no anxiety to leave this world. They never lose an opportunity of enjoining us to trust in the Lord—and seldom or never fail to ensure their buildings against fire."

R.: "There are two other matters which I must mention. Christians say their religion is built upon a solid rock, and that nothing that unbelievers do can possibly shake its foundation, yet they will resort to the meanest of devices to counteract their activities. As an example I would refer you to their attitude towards the projected Conference of the International Federation of Freethinkers. They would like the Government to ban the meeting, and already are actively engaged in tactics unworthy of people who are foremost in demanding freedom of speech—for themselves. Also Christians are not conspicuous for their adherence to the truth. Religious literature is notoriously untruthful, due perhaps to some extent to ignorance of facts which are easily available to anyone anxious for the truth. Lying for what they deem to be the Glory of God is considered by many to be a meritorious act. What would they think of Freethinkers, were they to indulge in lying for the glory of Freethought? Fortunately Freethinkers have

no desire to lie, the sole object of their crusade being the attainment of 'truth.'"

S.: "This little chat reminds me of an occasion when a Christian and I were discussing the myths of the Hindû religion. We agreed that they were grotesque. I asked him his opinion of those Hindus who criticized their religion in much the same way as Freethinkers criticized Christianity. He said he thought they were reformers doing good work. I then enquired his view of the critics of Christianity, and learnt that he considered them enemies of civilization. All the absurd biblical myths, including the adventures of Adam and Eve, Noah, Moses and Jonah, were to him sacred Christian truths."

R.: "The ways of the Christian are passing strange."

PRO REASON.

Parsonic Pelf

FROM an article contributed to the *Evening Standard*, by one signing himself "A Clerical Correspondent," we learn that the "question of poor livings is a great and increasing anxiety to the bishops." "The livings which are difficult to fill are naturally those of small value," he states; and quotes the Bishop of Worcester mentioning a "patron of livings who went so far as to ticket candidates 'P.M.' (private means) or 'W.H.M.' (wife has means)." We like the use of the word "naturally," in connexion with a "divine call" to the ministry! "Flat blasphemy as ever was committed"—to borrow from Shakespeare's "Dogberry."

However, it seems that "the majority of livings under £300 a year are brought up to that figure," but "there are still over 6,000 livings in England—about half the total number—which do not exceed £400 a year." Referring to the disparity between rich and poor livings, the writer says: "There is no relation between work and remuneration." We would say that that is a fact applicable to all livings.

"A Clerical Correspondent" proceeds:—

A return made to the Church Assembly in 1934 showed that there are about 500 benefices with a population of less than 500, in which the income was £600 a year or more. Of these, some fifty have a gross income of over £1,000, though in all but seventeen the net figure was below £1,000.

Some of the livings in the City of London are very rich and have a negligible population. Of more ordinary parishes, Stainby-with-Gunby, in Lincolnshire, according to the statutory return, has an income of £2,448 gross and £2,376 net, and a population of 216.

Probably the richest living in the Church of England is St. Mary the Virgin, Bury, which has a gross income of £8,970 and £3,770 net. That is in the gift of the Earl of Derby.

Next comes St. Luke's, Chelsea, in the gift of Earl Cadogan, with £5,070 gross. The net value is given in the statutory return as £2,209. That is a large parish with a population of over 18,000.

St. Michael's, Chester Square, has a net income of £2,047. The statutory return of St. Mary's, Southampton, shows a return of £2,286. In the diocese of Ely, the parish of St. Peter Upwell, with a population of 2,526, has a net income of £2,558. Stoke-on-Trent, a very large parish of 25,000 inhabitants, is returned as £3,477 gross and £2,382 net. St. John the Baptist, Halifax, is worth £3,946 gross and £2,534 net.

Altogether there are nearly 300 parishes with a net income of £1,000 or more.

The great difference between gross and net income is a matter which very few of the clergy could explain.

But, like Brer Rabbit, they'll lie low about *that*! A few years ago, the correspondent informs us, a measure was introduced into the Church Assembly for the appropriation of surplus endowments. The problem of determining what in any given instance could be regarded as surplus was so great that the measure was dropped.

"There ain't goin' to be no core, Johnny!" *Surplus* indeed!!

D.

Correspondence

RELIGIOUS OBSTRUCTION

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—Your readers may remember that in my "Open Letter" to Jesus Christ, I referred to Christian obstruction in the fight against the prevention of venereal disease, and quoted Sir Archdall Reid, K.B.E., that, with about a million perfectly guiltless sufferers in the United Kingdom, although venereal diseases can be prevented, this "knowledge of sanitation is being withheld from the people not by the will of the people, but only through the action of some highly-placed ecclesiastics and a few of their 'influential' followers."

Shortly afterwards I noticed the following letter, which appeared in the *Manchester Guardian*, from the National Society for the Prevention of Venereal Disease:—

As long ago as 1923, the report of the Trevethin Committee on Venereal Disease was published by the Ministry of Health. The findings of the Committee were definitely favourable to the policy of the education of the public in scientific methods of prevention, but not only has nothing been done towards giving them effect, but this society, the only organization working for the diffusion of such knowledge, has met with unremitting hostility from certain quarters.

We desire to bring to the notice of your readers a striking instance of this hostility. This society is sponsoring a film entitled "The Price of Ignorance," and application was made to the London County Council for authority to exhibit it in that body's area. This authority was granted subject to the excision of all reference to the possibility of prevention, so that those seeing the film are not permitted to learn that these diseases can be prevented, and even the address of the society has been deleted.

This is, we suggest, a particularly harmful kind of censorship, and one entirely out of step with contemporary thought.

Now this is the kind of censorship that makes my blood "boil" with rage. Are there no wicked lengths to which this evil creed will not go?

R. STANDFAST.

JOHN WESLEY

SIR,—My letter to you, published on January 16, contains the following sentence:—

A curious love affair between J.W. and his house-keeper; it gives a curious insight into the early economy of the Methodists. It is entirely unknown to all Wesley's biographers.

As this sentence forms the second part of John Russell Smith's advert of the book in question, it should, like the first part, have been let into the column. The omission to in-let it conveys the impression that I wrote it, whereas it was written eighty-two years ago, more than a decennium before my birth.

Permit me to take this opportunity to remark that in the spring of 1934, a collection of letters between John Wesley and Miss Ann Tindall of Scarborough, was presented by descendants of her family to the British Museum. The extracts published in the newspapers at the time of the donation, show that the epistles were of a tender nature. It would be very interesting to ascertain the date of the correspondence in order to compare it with contemporary incidents in Wesley's career.

C. C. DOVE.

Obituary

W. P. CAMPBELL-EVERDEN

It is with deep regret that we have to report the death of Mr. W. P. Campbell-Everden, who until recently was a familiar figure in Hyde Park, where he did considerable and useful work from the platform of the West London Branch N.S.S. He made many friends by the earnestness of his Freethought work, and the better type of his opponents respected him for his sincerity. Unfortunately we have no details of the funeral arrangements, and regret our inability to be helpful in giving them publicity. We extend sincere condolence to the surviving members of the family.—R.H.R.

National Secular Society

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD JANUARY 13, 1938

THE President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, in the chair.

Also present: Messrs. Clifton, Hornibrook, Preece, Elstob, Seibert, Ebury, Tuson, Wood, Bedborough, Mrs. Grant, and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and accepted. Monthly Financial Statement presented. New members were admitted to Glasgow, North London Branches, and to the Parent Society.

Details in connexion with the Annual Conference were discussed. In agreement with the Branches the Conference for 1938 will be held in Glasgow. Correspondence from Bradford, Glasgow, and North East Federation of N.S.S. Branches was dealt with. Progress was reported in the arrangements for the Annual Dinner on January 22. Details concerning the International Congress in London this year were noted, and the Chairman informed the meeting that arrangements were proceeding satisfactorily. The next meeting of the Executive was fixed for Thursday, February 17, and the proceedings closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,

General Secretary.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON

OUTDOOR

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond-Hampstead): 11.30, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury. Parliament Hill Fields, 3.0, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury.

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

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place): 7.30, Saturday night and Sunday night, Mr. J. W. Barker will speak at each meeting.

INDOOR

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH (Alexandra Hotel, South Side, Clapham Common, S.W.3): 7.30, Mr. R. G. Flaxman (Catholic Evidence Guild)—"The Existence of God."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Har Dayal, Ph. D., M.A.—"Whither France?"

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, Mr. R. B. Kerr—"Should Germany's Colonies be Returned to Her?"

COUNTRY

INDOOR.

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane): 7.0, Rev. Lillian S. Preston (Birkenhead)—"The Comparative Study of Religion."

BURNLEY (St. James' Hall): 11.0, Mr. J. Clayton—"The Secret of all Faith Healing."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. J. Clayton—"The Dying Beliefs of the Church of England."

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Freegardeners' Hall, Picardy Place, Edinburgh): 6.45, Mrs. Whitefield (Glasgow N.S.S.)—"Turnstiles in Revolution."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Mr. J. Lawrie, G.S.S.—"A Night with Burns."

GREENOCK BRANCH N.S.S. (Shepherd's Hall, Regent Street): 7.0, Mr. F. Smithies—"The Humours of Religion."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. C. A. Smith, M.A., Ph.D., B.Sc. (Econ.) Editor of *Controversy*—"Society, the State, and Totalitarianism."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Islington Liverpool, entrance in Christian Street): 7.0, Mr. C. McKelvie (Liverpool)—"The Adventure of Freethought."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. ("King's Café," Oxford Road): 7.0, Mr. Geo. Taylor—"Christian Questions Examined."

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Green Street): 7.0, Mr. N. Charlton (Gateshead)—A Lecture.

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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
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world to be based on error, and to be a source of in-
jury 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
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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
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can best help by filling up the attached form and
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PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS.

SECULARISM affirms that this life is the only one of
which we have any knowledge, and that human
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ment: it asserts that supernaturalism is based upon
ignorance, and assails it as the historic enemy of pro-
gress.

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 re-
ligious organizations it seeks to spread education, to
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ing international peace, to further common cultural in-
terests, and to develop the freedom and dignity of man.

The Funds of the National Secular Society are legally
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