

# THE FREETHINKER

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## Views and Opinions

### More about the Godless Conference

We were, it seems, a little premature in congratulating the *Church Times* on its standing apart from the deliberately lying campaign of the Roman Catholic press and the rag-tag and bobtail of the religious world, concerning the Congress of the World Union of Freethinkers in London. In its issue for February 18, and in the editorial notes, appears the following. The italics are mine:—

The Roman Catholic newspapers are urging the authorities to prohibit the Freethinker's Congress, which it is proposed to hold in London in September. *The avowed object of this international meeting is to assail the Church as the bulwark of Capitalism and the enemy of social reform, and to defend the Bolshevik persecution in Russia,* and to discuss the most effective methods of Atheist propaganda. Sir Samuel Hoare, the Home Secretary, himself a devout Churchman, has said in the House of Commons that "it would be contrary to our traditions of toleration to interfere with the holding of such a congress," and we entirely agree. . . . Is the Christian so fearful that he would silence opposition and gag the doubter? . . . One of the weaknesses of the Christian position is that so few Christians understand their opponent's case. We would afford the opponents the fullest opportunity to give themselves away. . . . If it be held the Congress speakers must behave with the decency and restraint demanded in this country. Cheap blasphemies that would outrage public opinion and excite breaches of the peace would compel the police summarily to bring the proceedings to an end.

It is a pity that the "decency and restraint" which, quite unnecessarily, the editor of the *Church Times* hopes the speakers at the Conference will impose on themselves, does not operate to prevent the circulation of deliberate lies. We cannot believe that the editor is not well alive to the readiness with which Christians lie about their opponents. He has protested too often himself against the untruthfulness of his Christian critics for me to make that assumption. And we have borne testimony to the pro-

tests he has made against the lies told by the religious enemies of the Spanish Government. Why, then, did not he take the elementary precaution of seeking information about the World Union of Freethinkers and the aims of the London Congress? The literature of the World Union is available, and the *Freethinker* office is quite near. Information would have freely been given. Why this sudden linking up with the Great Lie Brigade? Has pressure been brought to bear upon him? Or does he think that where Freethinkers are concerned it is not necessary to pay any regard to the truth?

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### Christian Truth and Pious Fury

The enthusiasm of new recruits is proverbial. Having joined the G.L.B., the *Church Times* sets out with two "whoppers." It says the "avowed" objects of the Congress is to "assail the Church as the enemy of Capitalism," and to "defend the Bolshevik persecution in Russia." Both statements are false. We challenge the *Church Times* to bring any evidence whatever in support of its statements, that is, any evidence beyond the lying statements of other Christians. They are pure fabrications by whomever they are made. I write this as one of those who were originally responsible for the invitation of the World Union to hold its Congress in London, and as chairman of the Committee that drew up the programme of the Congress. That programme contains no attack on Capitalism; it contains no defence of persecution in Russia. Actually political and economic propaganda form no part of the work of the British Societies that invited the Union to hold its Congress in London; they form no part of the work of the World Union itself. We hope that is definite enough. We should feel it is decisive, were we not dealing with those who will reply with St. Paul "If the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory, why yet am I also judged as a sinner?" The occasions are very, very few when Christians have chided their brethren for "lying for the greater glory of God."

Before the issue of last week's *Freethinker*, some of the wild statements concerning the Congress might have been taken as a mere repetition of the circumstantial lies of certain Christian propagandists. After that issue no such excuse is valid. Some hundreds of copies of it have been distributed among Cabinet Ministers, Members of Parliament, religious newspapers and the general press. And lest they should, on receipt, be mistaken for mere circulars and thrown on one side, they have been sent in sealed envelopes. If it had been within my power I would have sent thousands where hundreds have gone. This, I should say, has not been done by the instructions of the Committee, but on my own initiative. At any rate, I am giving all Christians who are not wedded to the policy of lying, the opportunity of be-

having with decency. But I shall be agreeably surprised if many of them take advantage of it. The Christian conscience does not work in that way.

I am not greatly impressed by the air of liberality of Sir Samuel Hoare. He is granting a liberty that it is not within his power to deny. He knows that he is legally powerless to prohibit the Congress, and those parsons and "Mother's meetings" that are, at the instigation of their spiritual guides, passing resolutions that the Conference be prohibited, are acting in ignorance. A street meeting may be prohibited because the police may fear, or pretend they fear, a breach of the peace. But a meeting in a hall is a different matter; and when the *Church Times* talks of "cheap blasphemy" that may lead the police "summarily to bring the proceedings to a close," it is, as the man in the street would say, "talking through its hat." The police have, as yet, no such power, and any policeman who attempted to do so might legally be ejected from the hall and summoned for disturbing a public meeting. As for Sir Samuel Hoare's implied threat that some of the speakers might be stopped on the ground of their being undesirable aliens, that leaves us cold. Even that would not stop the Congress being held, or the speeches delivered.

I agree with the *Church Times* that few Christians understand their opponent's case. But is the *Church Times* any better informed? It does not seem so. The International Union has been in existence for more than fifty years, and its aims and principles have been published to the world. It has held no secret meetings, and the *Church Times* might easily have had any relevant information it required. But it took no steps to secure this information, and it repeated, with some embellishments of its own, the lies that other Christians had set going. And it speaks of the "decency of restraint" that should be observed by Freethought speakers! In the face of the persistent lying and malignancy of Christians when dealing with Freethought, I hardly think any language would be too strong for the occasion.

\* \* \*

#### A Moral for Freethinkers

I have written on this subject of the Conference plainly and strongly; but I can assure everyone that I am not in the least annoyed. I have the grim satisfaction that a doctor may have when he has foreseen the exact course of an obscure disease, even when it ends in the death of the patient. He does not wish to see his patient suffer, nor is he pleased at his death; he is merely gratified by his understanding of the situation. And I have the same satisfaction in seeing Christians behave—exactly as I anticipated they would behave in given circumstances. Human behaviour is not fundamentally unpredictable; it is merely complex, and not easy to understand. Man is only a partly civilized animal, and the part that is civilized is on the surface. But the primitive lurks beneath. And while on normal occasions human behaviour is governed, so to speak, by the topmost layer, when deeper feelings are stirred, when we touch these layers of the primitive and the pre-scientific and the savage, to which religion belongs, we tap forces which cast civilized habits and rules to the winds. Religion does not alter its nature, it only changes the form in which it is expressed; and when it is seriously threatened it is as brutal, as intolerant, as unscrupulous as ever.

A second reason for my not being annoyed at this outburst of Christian malignancy and lying is that it has given the Congress a finer advertisement than it could have obtained by any other means. As I said last week, I have been interviewed by several newspapers; although they have been careful not to pub-

lish the information given, because, I suspect, they did not wish to displease their religious readers, and they could not publish without branding these Christian propagandists as liars. And the other day an American magazine cabled its representative to find out the truth of the matter. He came, he received the truth, and he went. Perhaps that news will be published. I do not know, and I do not care. But I do hope that the Great Lie Brigade will keep busy until September. It will save the Committee much expense in advertising.

It will do something else. It has done something else. I have never ceased to warn Freethinkers not to be misled by the fact that a certain proportion of Christians are of a more liberal type than was common some centuries ago. Times have changed, and it is not profitable for all Christians to be as openly intolerant as they were. But this row over the Conference has shown that the intolerance is still there, ready to find expression whenever occasion offers. The policy of taming a tiger by feeding it on cream buns, is interesting, but it has its dangers. And the tolerance that is shown towards a meek heresy is evidence only that it is preferred to one that is outspoken and uncompromising.

Some few years ago George Bernard Shaw said that the *Freethinker* was a paper the country could not afford to lose. Naturally I agreed with him. Seriously I think that he spoke no less and no more than the truth. Both the *Freethinker* and the National Secular Society represent a form of propaganda that this country cannot afford to lose. They have always spoken the truth without hesitation or prevarication. The *Freethinker* has made loyal friends, it has not gained them by placating their prejudices or catering to their fears. Its friends come to it unsought and unbought. I wish they were more numerous, because that would give a larger influence than it possesses. And while its friends give it the testimony of their affection, its enemies pay it the tribute of their fears. I have received many letters of appreciation and thanks, recently, for what we have done. I care for only one form of thanks—that which is translated into action. If they can increase the circulation of the *Freethinker* they will increase its influence. They will also make the burden of its maintenance lighter than it is at present. And both will serve to draw nearer the end of the world's greatest superstition.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

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#### KNOWLEDGE

The real animating power of knowledge is only in the moment of its first being received, when it fills us with wonder and joy; a joy for which, observe, the previous ignorance is just as necessary as the present knowledge. . . .

. . . Once thoroughly our own, the knowledge ceases to give us pleasure. It may be practically useful to us, it may be good for others, or good for usury to obtain more; but, in itself, once let it be thoroughly familiar, and it is dead. The wonder is gone from it, and all the fine colour which it had when first we drew it up out of the infinite sea. . . . All men feel this, though they do not think of it, nor reason out its consequences. They look back to the days of childhood as of greatest happiness, because those were the days of greatest wonder, greatest simplicity, and most vigorous imagination. And the whole difference between a man of genius and other men, it has been said a thousand times, and most truly, is that the first remains in great part a child, seeing with the large eyes of children, in perpetual wonder, not conscious of much knowledge—conscious, rather, of infinite ignorance and yet infinite power; a fountain of eternal admiration, delight and creative force within him meeting the ocean of visible and governable things around him.

John Ruskin.

## Pestilent Propaganda

"The carpenter said nothing, but  
'The butter's spread too thick.'"

*Alice in Wonderland.*

"How can I hate anything unless I am myself filled  
with hatred."—*Goethe.*

FREETHINKERS are aware that trickery and evasion are associated with the Christian Religion, but few are fully aware of the wide extent of these malpractices. Near two thousand years ago Christian scribes were forging documents and faking relics relating to their religion, and to-day tract-writers are retailing lies for the glory of their god. Nor is this all, for the Press Boycott, by which all matters relating to Free-thought are either excluded or wilfully misrepresented by Christian editors in the interests of their religion, is just as active to-day as it was a century ago. Indeed, in some quarters, the conspiracy of silence against Freethought is passing wonderful. The very name is like that of the god of the Ancient Hebrews, which was never to be spoken. Where the conspiracy of silence is broken, accidentally, the Christians display another aspect of their venomous attitude towards Freethought, which is then grossly misrepresented and slandered. Few, however, are fully aware that this peculiar Christian propagandist habit is spread beyond the periodical press and actually extended to literature itself, and that the constant campaign of insult and calumny is just as apparent in books as in newspapers, parish magazines, and periodicals. Look, for example, at the works of reference which are to be found in public and private libraries, and notice how Freethought and Free-thinkers are treated in their pages. Sins of omission and commission constantly leap to the eye of the educated reader, who may be ill-prepared for this exhibition of the fierce flash of the primitive, barbarian spirit of Christianity. For, in this twentieth century, Christians are no longer able to burn their opponents alive, and they are obliged to answer the arguments of the "Intellectuals," or make a pretence of defending their own doctrines. Feeling that the tendency of Rationalism is against them, and afraid of the consequences of resisting it, they bend before it rather than break.

One of the most popular series of the day is Dent's *Everyman Library*, which, in the main, is an enterprise to be commended. It includes among its works of reference, *A Short Biographical Dictionary of English Literature*, by J. W. Cousins, which is full of bias against Freethinkers. For example, the following interesting passage occurs in a short notice of Shelley the poet:—

The charge of Atheism rests chiefly on "Mab," the work of a boy, printed by him for private circulation, and to some extent repudiated as personal opinion.

This book, be it remembered, is a work of reference, yet the compiler cannot quote correctly the title of Shelley's most famous poem. Neither does he say that there were very many editions of *Queen Mab*, and that many men and women were prosecuted for selling the volume. Another famous poet comes in for attack, precisely because he was an Atheist. James Thomson, the author of the *City of Dreadful Night*, is introduced as an awful warning, for we are told his "views resulted in depression which led to dipsomania." In the case of George Eliot, the novelist, the information is given that "her general view of life is pessimistic," despite the fact that she herself expressly coined the word, "meliorism," in order to show her attitude towards optimism and

pessimism. Robert Buchanan's Freethought is slurred over by the grudging admission that some of his poems were directed against certain aspects of the Christian Religion.

Another reference book, *The Victorian Age of Literature*, issued in the Home University Library, was the work of G. K. Chesterton, whose peculiar piety was so notorious that the editors had to apologize for its venomous exuberance. He was unpardonable in his many insults to Freethinkers. He says that Thomas Hardy was "a village Atheist brooding and blaspheming over the village idiot." Swinburne is accused of writing "an indecent parody of the Blessed Virgin"—surely an ironical suggestion in a Protestant country. Emily Brontë, a rare and unmistakable genius, is described as "unsociable." The only Freethinker to whom Chesterton is even civil is James Thomson, who, he says, pontifically, "Knew how to be democratic in the dark." As Chesterton spells this poet's name with a "p," the compliment is a doubtful one after all. Chesterton, it will be recalled, was the man who challenged the dogmatism of the Secularist, convicted science of irrationality, and pretended to find liberty inside the Romish Church, which is the hindmost of all the religious organizations in Christendom.

Still another reference book, *Chambers' Encyclopaedia*, in an edition issued a few years ago, is full of bias directed against Freethinkers and Freethought. A diatribe against Thomas Paine is quoted from Leslie Stephen, which the writer apologized for, but there is no mention of this latter fact. Colonel Ingersoll is said to have attracted more attention than he deserved, and readers are referred for information concerning Charles Bradlaugh to a libellous life, which Bradlaugh himself proceeded against in the Law Courts and had destroyed. Even the then popular novelist, "Ouida," is accused of "muscular heathenry" and "encyclopaedic ignorance."

This sort of thing in newspapers, periodicals, pamphlets and reference-books, is the latest form of an infamous religious tradition, which may be traced back throughout the centuries for the Roman poet, Lucretius, suffered from it. The fortunes of really great and outstanding geniuses like Shelley, Meredith, Hardy, and Swinburne, to mention no others, have been adversely influenced by this frigid and calculated campaign of insult and misrepresentation. Free-thought invariably incurs the hatred of the superstitious, and no enmity is more unscrupulous, more relentless, or more venomous. This filth and garbage is thrown at Freethinkers of set design and set purpose. It is meant to discredit the characters and writings of men and women who look scornfully at the Christian Superstition.

Freethought has wrested so many positions from Christianity that in order to support the tottering edifice of superstition, believers will hesitate at nothing to buttress the wavering allegiance of their luke-warm fellow-believers. Christian priests will never rebuke their dupes for lying for the glory of their god, and for using dirty weapons in defending a wealthy vested interest. Formerly, the priests of the Religion of Love used scaffolds, stakes, prisons, and torture chambers. Now that this is no longer possible, they rely on lies, libels, and misrepresentations, and the poisoned weapons of their craft. It is the Free-thinker, conscious of the persecution and the yoke of centuries, who can recognize the awful humbug and hypocrisy of the pretence of Christians loving their enemies. It is not debasing the moral currency for Christians to lie and defame those who differ from them, not on one or two occasions, but deliberately and of set purpose over a period of nearly twenty

centuries. The men and women they sought to belittle and defame were not only distinguished, but often of rare genius and an honour to the race that produced them. The traducers knew this, and only lied the more lustily. Humour comes to the rescue. As the Oriental proverb reminds us; an insect may bite a lion, but the insect remains an insect, and the lion remains a lion.

MIMNERMUS.

## Moonshine

THEOLOGY, the so-called science of God, may be defined briefly as a collection of unfounded assumptions which it is hoped will not be found out. There is the assumption that this ball is the plaything of an all-powerful God, omniscient and omnipresent. There is the comforting supposition that this hypothetical Master Mind of the Universe may be induced, by means of flattery, cajolery, and bribery, to evince a friendly interest in Man, the alleged apple of His all-seeing eye. And there is the artful insistence that certain men—i.e., the theologians themselves—are better able to haggle with the Divine than the generality of men. Grant all this, and the theologian can explain everything, including the colossal errors of his no less infallible predecessors which *have* been found out—e.g., that the world is flat, immovable, and the haunt of demons and witches.

Precisely how did this mountebankery begin? I submit the novelty that the theological method of penetrating the unknowable was unwittingly given to the world as the result of a joke—that it was the outcome of a prank played by a semi-philosophic wit of prehistoric times who, finding himself involved in, and bored by, a learned disagreement (if I may so designate the wordy brawls of the tribal wise men of the period) essayed to end the dispute in a highly novel and unprecedented manner.

Regarding the subject of the dispute, we can, of course, but guess. In the absence of any evidence whatsoever to the contrary, I make and forthwith adopt the suggestion that the argument in question concerned the moon, and that the issue at stake was whether the striking resemblance of the earth's satellite to a piece of ripe cheese was real or merely fanciful. Having due regard to the fortuitous circumstances which ensure that no two philosophers, pondering a given question, ever reach an identical conclusion, we can readily visualize what transpired. One philosopher, we may be sure, pleaded that there was no way of determining whether the moon was made of cheese or not. Another maintained that merely the lunar surface—to a depth, say, of seven miles—consisted of cheese. A third inclined to the view, and ably argued, that it was the lunar core that was composed of cheese, and so on.

In the meantime, what of the lay audience, hopefully gathered to hear the debate? We need entertain no doubts about the manner in which the populace reacted. Swayed first by one argument, and then by another, the bewildered listeners soon found themselves in the intolerable position of not knowing what to believe. Popular feeling began to run high—so high, indeed, that when one of the speakers incautiously derided the entire proceeding, and categorically denied that the moon so much as smelt of cheese, he narrowly escaped being mobbed to death for Atheism. It was at this critical moment that the philosophical joker saw the light. What he perceived, in effect, was this: that while it might not be possible conclusively to demonstrate that the moon

was made of cheese, *neither was it possible to show otherwise*. And thus fortified, he mischievously proclaimed that the moon was undoubtedly cheese, the whole cheese, and nothing but cheese—and let any man disprove it who could.

It need hardly be added, I hope, that the theological method, thus introduced, was an immediate success. So overwhelming, indeed, was the popular acclaim, that even the impractical joker (in whom there lurked a congenital yearning for absolute certainty) was moved to embrace the New Truth, which thereby gained its natural leader. His first official act, I dare say, was to announce himself the head of a Cheese Cult, in which exalted and almost papal capacity he hastened to consolidate his position by a pious expounding of the vital significance of cheese in the cosmological scheme of things. He established the fact that in the beginning, all living things came from Cheese, to which delectable state the good and virtuous would in due course revert. The innate sinfulness of man (and especially woman) he ingeniously ascribed to an ancestral partiality for a piece of ripe, old Forbidden Cheese—and decreed, as a belated act of expiation, that the Faithful should henceforth refrain from eating Cheese on Monday mornings and Bank Holiday afternoons, if wet. It seems reasonable to suppose that an exception was made in the case of Holy Cheese, not (never let it be said) because it chanced that the ecclesiastical coffers were swelled by the sale thereof, but because the consumption of this consecrated coagulation was at all times urged as a special act of grace.

All went well, no doubt, until there was raised the fateful question of the nature of the sacred lunar Cheese. Was it Gorgonzola, Stilton, or Cheshire? Only a compromise averted a threatened schism. The erstwhile philosopher, called upon to settle the dispute, boldly declared in favour of all three, announcing, after due prayer:—

That we worship one Cheese in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; neither confounding the Brands: nor dividing the Substance. For there is one Brand of the Gorgonzola: another of the Stilton: another of the Cheshire. But the Cheeshead of the Gorgonzola, of the Stilton, and of the Cheshire, is all one: the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal. Such as the Gorgonzola is, such is the Stilton: and such is the Cheshire. The Gorgonzola uncreate, the Stilton uncreate: and the Cheshire uncreate. The Gorgonzola incomprehensible, the Stilton incomprehensible: and the Cheshire incomprehensible. The Gorgonzola eternal, the Stilton eternal: and the Cheshire eternal. And yet they are not three eternals: but one eternal. As also there are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated: but one uncreated, and one incomprehensible. So likewise the Gorgonzola is Almighty, the Stilton Almighty, and the Cheshire Almighty. And yet they are not three Almighties: but one Almighty. So the Gorgonzola is Cheese, the Stilton is Cheese: and the Cheshire is Cheese. And yet they are not three Cheeses: but one Cheese. So likewise the Gorgonzola is Lord, the Stilton is Lord: and the Cheshire is Lord. And yet not three Lords: but one Lord. For like as we are compelled by the Cheesian verity: to acknowledge every Brand by itself to be Cheese and Lord; so we are forbidden by the Cheese Cult: to say, there be three Cheeses, or three Lords. The Gorgonzola is made of none: neither created, nor begotten. The Stilton is of the Gorgonzola alone: not made, nor created, but begotten. The Cheshire is of the Gorgonzola and of the Stilton: neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding. So there is one Gorgonzola, not three Gorgonzolas: one Stilton, not three Stiltons: one Cheshire not three Cheshires. And in this Trinity none is afore, or after other: none is greater, or less than another: but the whole three Brands are co-eternal

together: and co-equal. So that in all things, as is aforesaid: the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped. He, therefore that will be saved: must thus think of the Trinity.

Alas! within twenty-four hours an heretical opportunist was proclaiming Cheddar as the One and Only True Cheese—and let any man disprove it who could. The rise of our now perfected Christian civilization had begun.

P. H. CLEATOR.

## The Codex Sinaiticus Again

### II.

WHEN the famous Continental firm of Tauchnitz, whose paper-backed editions of English books are so well known to visitors in Europe, came to the publication of their thousandth volume, they decided to honour England by printing the Authorized Version of the New Testament; and to make it still more worthy of such a memorable occasion they engaged Dr. Tischendorf to edit the text in the light of the three great Codices, the *Sinaiticus*, the *Vaticanus*, and the *Alexandrinus*.

Curiously enough, though I was some years in France. I never was able to come across a copy there; and I have an idea that the volume never reached the popularity for which its publisher thought it destined. There were, as a matter of fact, good reasons for this. Here was our well-known New Testament packed with notes by one of the most foremost Biblical scholars in the world. Unfortunately, these notes, instead of strengthening God's Word as known by all English speaking people, proved beyond any doubt whatever that the three most ancient Codices of the Bible not only differed among themselves as to what really was God's Word, but they also differed in the most unaccountable way with what had been accepted hitherto as Holy Writ. These differences were by no means just variations of unimportant words and phrases due to the errors of ignorant scribes; they consisted of differences which were in many cases doctrinal, and there were, in addition, many most unaccountable omissions of whole paragraphs. Tischendorf's notes are highly entertaining to a Freethinker, for he uses the word "omit" over and over again to show that one or two or three or all of the great Codices omit most important sayings and doings of "Our Lord."

Let us take as an example the "Lord's Prayer," perhaps the best known portion of the whole of the Bible. Both the *Sinaiticus* and the *Vaticanus* omit the last phrase—"For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory. Amen." It is therefore omitted from the Revised Version, though the Revisers say in the margin that "Many authorities, some ancient, but with variations, add" it. The Revised Version actually expunges fifteen words, and adds and alters others, with the result that it is impossible for the truly pious to say with any certainty now what "Our Lord" actually did say in the "prayer." Did he or did he not miss out the "Doxology"? Alas, no one knows; and the reader of Tischendorf's edition of the New Testament was left in a state of horrible uncertainty as to what was the Truth in the New Testament, or what was not.

Tischendorf himself felt all this—though in his case his faith was so great that he would have swallowed thousands of more omissions and variations without turning a hair. Even if there had been no obvious reasons for these strange aberrations from the truth, he could always invent some or suggest other plausible

ones. In his Introduction to the Tauchnitz edition, he says:—

It may be urged that our undertaking is opposed to true reverence; and by thus exposing the inaccuracies of the English Version, we shall bring discredit upon a work which has been for centuries the object of love and veneration both in public and private. But those who would stigmatize the process of scientific criticism and test, which we propose, as irreverent, are greatly mistaken. To us the most reverential course appears to be, to accept nothing as the word of God which is not proved to be so by the evidence of the oldest, and therefore the most certain, witnesses that He has put into our hands.

This would have been quite good argument if only he had proved that the oldest witnesses were really the most certain. Let us admit that he proved they were old; but they were copies made at least two hundred years after the "originals" were made—that is, of course, if there ever were any "originals" in the real sense of the word. There is no proof whatever that some one called "Matthew" sat down and wrote a Gospel which we know under his name substantially in the form we have in our Authorized Version; and that the variations from the "true" version are due to errors of transcribers. Nobody knows how a Gospel was written, or by whom, or when. In his *Daily Telegraph* articles on the *Sinaiticus*, Mr. Skeat tells us that behind it was a Codex which "we can picture as a kind of master-copy, swarming with corrections and various readings which had accumulated during years of research and comparison of different manuscripts." It need hardly be said that this is also pure conjecture, but possibly on the right lines; but if so, it only makes matters worse, as it shows that even before our "oldest" manuscripts there were great variations in the copies, none of which has so far come down to us except in a few cases in Old Latin or other languages.

There is another version of the Lord's Prayer in Luke and a comparison of the Authorized Version and the Revised Version shows how strongly the Revisers were influenced by the *Sinaiticus* and the *Vaticanus*, which omit certain clauses. These two MSS. also differ from each other on the same question, so that the believer can take his choice. He has one satisfaction however—so long as he does believe whatever he believes, he is according to the Authorized Version quite safe; Hell will not be his portion.

Tischendorf, in his Tauchnitz edition points out, on the authority of the *Sinaiticus*, that the last verse of John was omitted by the scribe. "Responsible scholars," says Mr. Skeat, "questioned or contradicted his conclusions" on this point. But the examination of the clause with the aid of an ultra-violet lamp settled the question in the scholar's favour. The verse had been omitted and the usual "tailpiece" added; but the scribe had later changed his mind. "He washed the vellum clean, and inserted the final verse, re writing the tailpiece and title lower down the page." This last verse of John is worth copying here:—

And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.

This is, of course, unmitigated nonsense, and perhaps the scribe of *Sinaiticus* thought it was. As it is found in all the other MSS. he was no doubt compelled to put it in. But the very next verse in the New Testament gives it the lie anyway. It is supposed to be written by Luke, and begins the Acts of the Apostles: "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and

teach, until the day in which he was taken up. . . ." If Luke had written *all* about Jesus until his death in "a former treatise," John was talking balderdash.

Everybody, of course, knows how Jesus is supposed to have said of the Jews, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." This line is omitted in the *Vaticanus*, and it is also omitted—or marked for deletion—by one of the correctors in the *Sinaiticus*; the Revised Version therefore has to put a note in the margin pointing this out. It would be absurd to say that it was accidentally missed out in the *Vaticanus*; why should such a splendid piece of "forgiveness" on the part of Jesus and so (obviously) characteristic of him be removed from the *Sinaiticus* if "Our Lord" had really said it? The answer is that nobody knows—and even Mr. Skeat, who specially points out this strange omission, cannot give an answer. All he feels constrained to say is that the experts are delighted to find so many errors, and contradictions, and additions, and omissions in the *Sinaiticus*. "A manuscript faultlessly copied by eye," he tells us so very disingenuously, "letter by letter, is by comparison a dead thing, telling us little or nothing of the personality or circumstances of the writer; but a dictated manuscript is a very different proposition, for the vastly increased opportunities for error, however regrettable they may seem in themselves, do give us a chance to learn something of scribe and reader alike." This is no doubt a comforting doctrine for the expert palæographer; but it would prove most interesting to know how the public like to feel that they have been asked to subscribe for a valuable ancient document supposed to be the Word of God in almost "mint" condition, and to find it far more packed with error than was ever imagined; and that these errors have brought joy to the hearts of the experts, because they can find something through them of the personality of the scribe or scribes—and not so much as to how the precious words of "Our Lord" have been transmitted by Providence.

Dean Burgon very bitterly attacked the Revisers for pinning their faith to the three Codices, the *Sinaiticus*, *Vaticanus*, and *Alexandrinus*; and he had the majority of Biblical scholars against him. They preferred to side with Westcott and Hort and their so-called "Neutral" text. The careful examination of the original manuscript of the *Sinaiticus*, an examination impossible to make in a facsimile, however good it may be, has shown that it was subject to "deliberate editorial revision."

Will the New Testament be the less boosted for that? Certainly not; whatever textual criticism may discover, the heart of the true Christian knows his religion to be a genuine one, and the only genuine one. What a blessed thing is Faith!

H. CUTNER.

There was, however, another form of what was deemed superstition connected with the Church, which was regarded by pagan philosophers with a much deeper feeling of aversion. To agitate the minds of men with religious terrorism, to fill the unknown world with hideous images of suffering, to govern the reason by alarming the imagination, was in the eyes of the pagan world one of the most heinous of crimes. These fears were to the ancients the very definition of superstition, and their destruction was a main object both of the Epicurean and of the Stoic. To men holding such sentiments, it is easy to perceive how obnoxious must have appeared religious teachers who maintained that an eternity of torture was reserved for the entire human race then existing in the world beyond the range of their own community, and who made the assertion of this doctrine one of their main instruments of success.—*Lecky*.

## How Christians will Lie

INGERSOLL once said, "Nothing is so prolific of its kind, nothing will lay and hatch so many eggs as a good, sound, healthy religious lie." And Jehovah, the Christian God said, "If a prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I, the Lord have deceived that prophet." Tons upon tons of Christian lies about infidels have been published by American and English religious tract societies. Recently a minister sent me one published by one of the former societies regarding Charles Bradlaugh. It was shrewd of them to put over one the scene of which was laid in England, where to get the evidence of its falsity required the getting of the evidence three thousand miles away. It was the same tactics of the Rev. Dr. Torrey, while he was preaching in England, when he mouthed the slanders regarding Ingersoll, and which the late W. T. Stead compelled him to retract, and compelled English Christians to agree not to import him to England again.

We are now called upon to mention Torrey's American predecessor, Dwight L. Moody, and incidentally to illustrate how Christians will lie. This tract I have mentioned tells how at one time, while Moody was in England, Bradlaugh packed his hall with infidels, hoping to discomfit Moody, and break up his meeting. But according to the sanctified liar Moody's sermon converted all the infidels, who "came to Christ." Truly wonderful, but a lie out of whole cloth, and the liar who invented it a poor artist.

In the first place Bradlaugh had a supreme contempt for men of the type of Moody, who never uttered a line that would interest an intelligent person. Then as a further proof of what a bungling liar the writer of this tract is, let me say that Bradlaugh could always get an audience, and did not have to capture any preacher's meeting. He could fill the largest hall in any English city, just as Ingersoll did in any American city. When he spoke in Trafalgar Square during his parliamentary struggle, 75,000 people heard him. The entire production is a silly idiotic Christian invention. As for Moody he was simply a corpulent old humbug, whose influence was limited to fools, many of whom have tried to imitate him.

Having given this example of one of Moody's characteristic lies, I will tell another which, while I cannot vouch for its truth, I tell, on the authority of a very respectable book *Library of Wit and Humor*, by Melville W. Langden. Moody once advertised a special meeting for railroad men, a class of men not easily swayed by their emotion. He decided to imitate the wreck of a train, likening it to going to hell. He paced the platform exclaiming, "Toot, toot, toot, toot," like the sound of an engine. Then, "We are now going at the rate of sixty miles an hour, we have passed the switch and hell's ahead!" Strange to say the railroad men all became frightened and rushed out of the Church, all except one lone brakeman, who was impressed by Moody's antics. He jumped on a chair and began to turn an imaginary brake, exclaiming to Moody, "If we have passed the switch and hell's ahead, you had better jump." Moody answered, "But you, my brother, but you," to which the brakeman answered, "Never mind me. I've been a brakeman on this road for thirty years, and I would be damn glad to lay off in hell for a while to rest. But jump! you old fool, if you are not tired of preaching!" It is needless to say that Moody never again tried to convert railroad men by imitating the wreck of a train. The effort was a failure, for it scared them away.

And now, another, with the facts of which I am

familiar. In early 1889 Moody came to Chicago to hold a series of revival meetings. He had with him a certain Rev. Dr. Driver, a professional "infidel smasher," who advertised that he had spent his time for twenty-five years preparing himself to answer the objections of infidels to Christianity. Also that he was willing to meet any of them in debate. Moody invited all the members of the Chicago Secular Society to attend and ask any questions they liked. As the Rev. Driver seemed to be spoiling for a debate, the Secular Society at once telegraphed the late Charles Watts, who then lived in Toronto, where he lectured and edited *Secular Thought*. Mr. Watts came, but when Driver looked into his big impressive blue eyes and aggressive face all the fight left him. He said he did not believe in debates. Of course not; he was simply a bluffer and a wind bag. The Freethinkers took him to task for breaking his word. A compromise was effected. Driver agreed to divide time with Mr. Watts, who in his speeches, must agree not to refer to anything he said, while he would agree not to refer to anything Mr. Watts said. So the people had a chance to hear both sides from the same platform. Mr. Watts afterwards told me all about it, as did my old friend Col. E. A. Stevens, then the President of the Chicago Secular Society. Mr. Watts said, "It was no debate. I merely lectured and Dr. Driver preached."

Yet Driver in later years boasted that he had met in debate an "English Infidel," "James Watts" and demolished him. "And the Lord" saith the scriptures "put a lying spirit in the mouths of these, his prophets, and they spake evil concerning thee." We now understand why they are so prolific in telling lies.

In 1896, Moody was in New York City, Messrs. G. W. Foote and Charles Watts were also there. Mr. Edward Dobson, Secretary of the Manhattan Liberal Club challenged Moody to debate. He declined, saying there was but one side to Christianity, which was God's side. He no doubt thought of his experience in Chicago seven years ago when he, and his man Friday, Driver proved themselves to be such charlatans and mountebanks.

One more! Once an intoxicated man in Moody's meeting exclaimed, "Mr. Moody, is it not a fact that you are nothing but a reformed drunkard?" "No sir," answered Moody, "I am not a reformed drunkard." "Then why don't you reform?"

FRANKLIN STEINER.

Milwaukee, Wisconsin, U.S.A.

## Acid Drops

We are surprised the editor of the *Church Times* passed a review of a book dealing with obsessions and superstitions, which spoke of witchcraft as one of many cults that still has its "dupes." We have to bear in mind that witchcraft is essentially traffic with the "devil and his angels." And among these dupes were Jesus Christ, all the Fathers of the Church, all the leaders of Christianity, right up till yesterday, and above all God Almighty himself, for he gave the command, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." And how could he order witches to be killed if they who believed in them were "dupes"? So the message of God to one generation becomes the folly and superstition of another. What a pity that God Almighty and Jesus were not better informed on the matter than they appear to have been. In that case hundreds of thousands of lives would have been saved.

We were quite pleased to meet again Mr. James Douglas in the *Daily Express* on a religious topic. In that subject he is always, unconsciously, amusing. For being

completely absurd, while wearing an air of a laughing philosopher, he is almost without a rival. This time he was asking the world at large whether a business man can be a Christian. He replies he can, and the reason he gives is that "the reputation of the City stands high because it is founded on Christian principles." In fact not the City only, but "all professions and avocations" are "fed and sustained by the Christian ethic of conduct." That is inclusive and conclusive. Its foundations granted, everything follows. When a man, whoever he is, and wherever he is, "the poor as well as the rich, the have-nots as well as the haves," whenever any of these do anything right, they are so acting as a consequence of Christian tradition. Bravo! Have I not said over and over again that Christianity does not change? It may wear the disguise of obscure language, but its core of absurdity is never removed. And who can make an absurdity so clear as he to whom absurdity wears the air of profound philosophy. Long life to Mr. James Douglas! When he dies we shall have lost the most absurdly humorous man on the press.

A few examples must be given. The honour of the legal profession is sustained by the Christian ethic. That is why no lawyer ever defends a prisoner unless he believes him innocent, and never tries to bamboozle a witness into saying what he does not mean to say. The medical profession is also based on the Christian ethic. This is illustrated by the frequency with which doctors commend prayer instead of physic, use exorcism to cure epilepsy, and take an oath of loyalty in their work that belongs to the days of the ancient Greeks. In every factory, in every warehouse, says Mr. Douglas, it is the same. We can now appreciate why masters never cheat their men, men never cheat their masters, and traders never act falsely towards their customers.

Mr. Douglas explains why our country is "respected by the whole distracted world." It is "because, as a race we try to put Christian principles into practice." Germany, Italy, France, to say nothing of the Japanese and the Chinese, etc., bear willing testimony to this. The Government also believe this—their armament policy is a mere pretence, intended as a mask to cover the confusion resulting by our being placed upon a pillar of excellence by the rest of the world. Above all, says Mr. Douglas, "We have Christian conscience, and it feels a stain like a wound." So we reach a grand conclusion, "We can do no wrong, because we are guided by a Christian ethic." We are guided by a Christian ethic, therefore we can do no wrong. Hail to Jimmy Douglas! When he is done with journalism he is sure of rousing a comic turn on a music hall stage by merely repeating his *Express* article.

A timely note to the silly gush of Mr. Douglas appeared in the *Daily Express*, a day or two later from Canon Charles Smyth, of Cambridge. He points out that:—

The word "Christian" is a technical term, it is not vaguely equivalent to such adjectives as "good," and "moral," and "decent." . . . A Christian is a man who holds the Christian faith, and is visibly a member of the visible Church of Christ.

That is good common-sense, but we do not suppose it will affect Mr. Douglas in the least. He has unlimited supply of religious slush for those who desire it.

You pay your money and take your choice. The Dean of St. Paul's says the Church Report on Doctrine is so popular it has become "best-seller." The Bishop of Durham says it is not true. The Report has fallen quite flat. Both gentlemen are in communion with God Almighty, and the difference in their judgments bears evidence of the association.

Canon Anthony Deane is giving a course of lectures on the Bible, and by way of helping students says that, "In the scientific use of the word Old Testament history is not history at all. History, in the modern sense, should be comprehensive and impartial. The Old Testament records are selective and purposive." That is very

helpful. If one says that the story of the Exodus, or the universal flood, or the story of Joseph (we know it to be an old Egyptian folk story) is not history, what is it? What would Canon Deane answer? That these stories "are selective and purposive"? Well, for what purpose were they selected, and what purpose had they in view who selected them? If the story of the origin of languages is not intended for history, what is it intended for? Canon Deane's rule appears to be that so long as the tale will be swallowed the Bible narratives are history. When that can no longer be held, they are selective and purposive. Which being interpreted means that they are selected, and for that purpose of keeping the Church in being. That is the chief use we are able to discover.

Dr. H. D. A. Major, the well known Modernist, is having a little discussion with Dr. Goudge as to the number of believing Christians who do not believe in the Virgin Birth, but who do believe in the Incarnation. Here are their names: Dr. Sanday, Dean Rashdall, Prof. Burkitt, Canon Glazebrook, Dr. Streeter, Dean Inge, Canon Lilley, and Dr. Bethune Baker. We have often wondered how these scholarly men could call themselves Christians when some of their published pronouncements were so obviously sceptical; and we are still puzzled how any one giving up such sheer nonsense as the Virgin Birth can yet believe in the equally stupid nonsense of the Incarnation. Christianity seems to have a lot more to answer for than we thought.

There is the usual exhibition of Christian morality in connexion with the agitation against football pools. The objection appears to be with most of them that promoters of the "pools" are getting an inordinate profit from them. But unless that means that the gamblers are not making enough out of the "sport," what does it mean? Obviously this objection would be removed if the promoters took nothing at all, or only a very small sum. The same objection was raised to the Irish Sweepstake, as though the proportion retained by the promoters of such schemes has anything to do with the ethics of the scheme. There is no objection raised to men in business gaining a huge percentage of profit on the goods they supply, or film actors getting enormous salaries, men making fortunes by gambling in stocks and shares, which obviously contributes nothing in the way of social service. We are not concerned with the question of whether it is wise or otherwise for men to have a try at the Football Pools, or buying shares in the hope of getting a profit they have done nothing to create. It is the pious humbug of it all that stands out most clearly.

One Member of Parliament asked the Home Secretary whether it was a fact that some people had committed suicide after indulging in a Football Pool Competition. Some may have done so, for all we know, but we confess that on reading the question, we felt as though we should like to encourage the practice in certain directions. People commit suicide through getting married or remaining single, through having too much money, or not having enough. Through hard work, or not having enough work to do. Through having a family, or from disappointment at not having one. There is nothing on the face of the earth that has not caused someone somewhere to commit suicide. And if the brilliant member who asked the question got bitten by the suicide "bug," there would evidently be one fool less in the world.

Here is a specimen of "religious" writing by Bishop Walter Carey, which deserves to be kept on record—though what it actually means the Lord only knows:—

The power-house of worship and intercession is not a man on his knees, but the Sacred Heart itself: the man is physically on his knees, but his soul is joined spiritually with that Heart which worships and intercedes. Things get done by prayer, not because we pray, but because Christ intercedes, and we join Him by our prayers in an intercession which must prevail, because it is His, and our contribution swells the mighty volume of His saving activity.

In the recent biography of Pope Pius XI., by Philip Hughes, there is an interesting reference to what the *Universe* says "will be news to many," namely:—

That Pope Leo XIII. grew so desperate at the attitude of the Italian Government towards the Holy See that "no fewer than five times . . . did he sound the Governments of Austria and Spain as to the chances of flight from Rome and its effects." It is interesting to speculate on what might be happening now had Pope Leo moved in either of these directions.

Fortunately everybody knows the main outlines on which the Holy (and wily) Pius bargained with Mussolini. The resultant "compromise" left the Vatican wealthier than ever, and saddled all the youth of Italy with an out and out Catholic education.

A fire broke out in St. Swithin's Church, Long Bennington, during the course of the Sunday evening service. The Vicar abandoned the service and asked the congregation to assist in putting out the fire. If the fire had occurred in an Atheist meeting-place God could not have been more deliberately ignored. Once upon a time a miracle would have occurred. No wonder the Archbishop of Canterbury wishes the people to return to religion.

The watchman of the Roman Catholic Cathedral, Westminster, discovered during his rounds that someone had broken open the offertory boxes and stolen their contents. And not one of the saints and angels that watch over the Church did anything to punish the thieves! Perhaps they deliberately declined to interfere, seeing that the cathedral authorities had not trusted them to protect the sacred building. The Church that supplies miracles by the gross might have trusted one of the many saints attached to the Church to have guarded the money better. To depend upon a watchman and the police is a very sad state of things.

### Fifty Years Ago

DR. CROSS, the Cork wife poisoner, was a "bold bad man." He carried on an intrigue with the governess in the home of his wife and children, and finally, in order to marry his new love, he slowly poisoned the old one. He did not cut her throat, he did not strangle or suffocate her, he did not slily push her into the river. No, he poisoned her with a slow and agonizing poison. He watched her sufferings unmoved, he heard her groans without a shudder. The mother of his children was merely a thing that stood in his way, and he removed her with as much indifference as he would have kicked a stone out of his path. Had he run away with the governess, leaving his wife and children provided for, he might have pleaded an uncontrollable passion; but to cruelly torture his wife to death, and then to bring his paramour as her legal successor into the dishonoured home, argues such an awful depth of callous wickedness that we may be glad the earth is rid of such a brutal wretch.

Freethinkers will now be prepared to learn that Dr. Cross was pious. Not only was he strongly attached to the doctrines of godliness, he was no less strongly persuaded that Protestantism is the only proper embodiment of divine truth. He hopes his children will be brought up in that faith, and he adds that "the Bible, pure and simple, is the true religion."

Here is a testimony to the truth, beauty, and holiness of Scripture! What better testimony can the Christians desire? It conforms to all the conditions which, in orthodox eyes, makes testimony valuable. It is given by an educated man, conscious of original sin, with a large experience of human depravity, in the shadow of death and in the very presence of his Maker. May we not, therefore, expect that Dr. Cross's recommendation of Holy Writ will henceforth be printed in religious tracts, circulated wholesale by Bible Societies, paraded everywhere by Young Men's Christian Associations, and extensively employed in the refutation of infidelity?

*The Freethinker*, February 26, 1888.



# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

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## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

FOR Circulating and Distributing the *Freethinker*.—"Cine Cere," 10s. 6d.

R. MORGAN (Oxford) writes: "Much obliged for your racy exposure of the lies about the International Congress. It is a long time since we so much enjoyed an onslaught on the 'enemy.' It should make some people more cautious, but will it make them more truthful?" We do not know. Probably the liar will remain a liar. But exposure may put a number of folk on their guard, and that will be so much to the good.

C. O'CONNOR (probably as an unconscious set-off to Mr. Morgan) writes complainingly that we do not give enough credit to Christians for the good characters among them. There is no need for us to give credit to Christians for this, they take it—with both hands. Our duty as a Freethinker is to point out that the virtues of Christians spring from their humanity. Their vices are of their own shaping and belong to their creed. Nor can we get over the feeling that it is not the Freethinker's duty to prove that he is as good as good Christians. He ought to be able to show that he is, intelligently, a darn sight better.

C. BULMAN.—It is a great pity that advanced social leaders of advanced social movements are fooled into believing that good can come from coquetting with religion.

N. J. HAWKS (Durham).—Thanks for new reader, and also for compliments. We hope we deserve some of them.

T. E. NICHOLAS.—Mr. Cohen hopes to reprint the essay on the Coronation as part of a series of kindred studies so soon as he can find time. But at present he is re-writing and enlarging his *Materialism Re-stated*, which has been out of print for some time, and he is also busy with many other things.

PAUL GOODMAN.—Your letter on the International Conference was good and to the point. The greater the pity that the *Daily Telegraph*, declined its publication. Still it is good to let these papers know that notice is taken.

H. SYLVESTER.—Obliged for cutting.

J. HOWARD.—We do not issue a "Freethinkers' Diary."

H. BAXFORD, A. THOMAS, AND W. H. SMITH.—Thanks for addresses of likely new readers; paper being sent.

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

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

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

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

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

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.

## Sugar Plums

The University Hall, Nottingham, was packed to capacity on Sunday last, to hear Mr. Cohen's address on "Must We Have a Religion?" There was a spirited discussion after the address, and an equally spirited reply. There were many visitors from a distance, all of whom seemed highly pleased with the result. It was as enthusiastic a meeting as Mr. Cohen has had this season. There seems room for a Branch of the N.S.S. in Nottingham.

There was a good demand for last week's issue of the *Freethinker*, which is now almost sold out. The notes on the International Conference were the cause, and we also have to thank the religious press, and those pin-brained pious Members of Parliament who so energetically backed up the Great Lie Brigade. We do not imagine for a moment that our plain and authoritative statement of the situation will stop a certain type of Christian lying. We do not believe in miracles. But it will at least enable Freethinkers to enlighten those of their Christian acquaintances who belong to a better type than the common run of fervent believers. Those who wish to secure extra copies for circulation may be supplied from returns that come in from wholesalers.

Next week the Secular Society, Limited, issues a sketch of the life of Henry Hetherington, by Mr. Ambrose Barker. Hetherington was born in 1792, and died in 1849, a declared Atheist. He was one of the pioneers of the Trades Union Movement, a fighter for the Freedom of the Press, and a creator of the Chartist movement. He went to prison three times, but it required more than imprisonment to break men of his type. Mr. Barker has written a stirring and notable sketch of a man who has been rather neglected, and a copy of it should be in the hands of all who attach interest to the history of reforms and reformers in the earlier half of the nineteenth century. Unfortunately too many of the writers on social reform seem timid in mentioning the part played by creative workers such as Hetherington. That is one of the reasons for its present publication. The pamphlet contains a portrait of Hetherington, the only one we have ever seen. Price 6d., by post 7d. We should like to see a copy in the possession of every one of our readers.

The Fifth Annual Dinner of the Liverpool Branch N.S.S. followed by a musical programme and speeches in the St. George's Restaurant, on Saturday 19th inst., provided a very enjoyable evening for all present including visitors from Preston, Bolton, Birkenhead, and Chester. On the Sunday, Mr. R. H. Rosetti addressed a meeting in the Picton Hall, and although there were a number of empty seats, considering the political meetings that were in full swing, the audience was very satisfactory. The lecture on "A Search for God," was well received and brought out many questions. Mr. G. Thompson acted as chairman in an efficient manner, and the Branch Secretary, Mr. J. V. Shortt, who was responsible for the general arrangements for the week-end, carried out everything with complete satisfaction.

On Friday, March 4, Mr. G. Bedborough will address the Enfield Left Book Club, on "Atheism and Progress," at the George Spicer School, Southbury Road, Enfield, at 8 p.m. We might take this opportunity of informing other outside organizations that the Executive of the N.S.S. is prepared to send representatives to address their members and put forward the Freethought point of view, and any applications for such speakers forwarded to the General Secretary, 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, will receive prompt attention.

Ap[ro]pos of the prayers that the Bishop of Salisbury recently asked the clergy in his diocese to offer for the cessation of foot and mouth disease the *Wetherby News* is reminded of:—

A story the late Rev. S. Baring Gould used to tell, when he was a curate in North Yorkshire. Someone whose pig represented their rent and was not only therefore of the greatest importance, but almost like one of the family, came to inform him that it was in "a very dowly way," and looked like "dying off." Mr. Gould sympathized, but this was not sufficient. He was requested to come and say a few words at the sty, whether in the way of exorcism or prayer for recovery was not made quite clear. Anyhow, such faith seemed to be centred in his "saying a few words" that he accompanied the distracted pig owner, leaned over the sty,

and in a solemn and sepulchral voice repeated several times the words, "O pig, if thou livest thou livest, and O pig, if thou diest thou diest." Almost immediately the ailing grunter began to recover and the parson's "powerful prayer" gained him no small local reputation. Some time afterwards Mr. Gould himself lay seriously ill, and the old woman whose pig he had cured, insisted on seeing him. She was shown into the sick room and very solemnly said "O parson if thou livest thou livest, and if thou diest thou diest." So amused was the Rev. S. Baring Gould that he burst out laughing, and from that moment began to recover.

The Bishop of Salisbury's suggested prayer runs as follows:—

We beseech Thee to look upon our present distress and grievous loss through disease amongst cattle. We pray that the measures taken to limit its diffusion, and to free us from its deadly effects, may bring a blessed deliverance, so that what remains unto us may be spared, and we may recover the fruits of our toil on farm and in market.

God, we are afraid, "does not care for oxen," and, because of that (which, to the pray-ers, is all important) men who pay tithes with reluctance are unlikely to be specially marked out for exhibition of divine favour.

The *News-Chronicle* tells us:—

York City players, the Third Division team in the last eight for the F.A. Cup—beat Middlesbrough on Saturday—went to church yesterday afternoon at St. Martin-cum-Gregory. Reg. Baines, leader of the York City attack, read the Lesson. Norman Wharton, the goalkeeper, played the organ. Peter Spooner, the hero of Saturday's match, lived up to his reputation as the "shyest man in football," and stood at the back with the overflow congregation.

The Rev. G. C. Beach, the vicar and a former player, said to the congregation: "We congratulate the York team. I do not see why we should not do so in God's House. Those of you who join me in congratulating them say 'Aye.'" Immediately there was a loud chorus of "Ayes" from the congregation.

Putting matters to the congregation in this way has its risks. We are reminded of the occasion when an ardent evangelist asked all those in his congregation who wished to go to Heaven to stand up. All stood up save one man. "And do you not wish to go to Heaven, my man?" asked the missionary. "Oh, yes!" was the response, "but not with a — excursion."

Two more of Mr. Cohen's *Pamphlets for the People* are in the press, and will be issued in the course of the next week or ten days. Their titles are "What is the Use of a Future Life?" and "Deity and Design." We are pleased to say that these pamphlets are still selling briskly, both in this country and abroad. Freethinkers find them handy for distribution among their religious friends. We need only add that the series aims at being more than a mere collection of pamphlets. They are intended to provide in a brief and simple form an outline of the whole philosophy of Freethought in its relation to religious and other aspects of life.

We are indebted to the *Islamic Review* for the following extract from a speech by the Rev. S. M. Zwerner, D.D., LL.D., published in *The Life of Faith* for September 1, 1937. The Rev. Zwerner, we are informed, is a veteran Christian missionary:—

Think of the colossal dimensions of what we call the Muslim world. Think of its expanding area, of the building of a Mosque in London at the expense of the Nizam of Hyderabad this year; think of the baffling fact that Islam is the only religion that has defeated Christianity and eclipsed Christianity—Buddhism never did it, Hinduism never did it, but Islam has literally wiped out areas once Christian, blotted out Bishoprics and Churches where they sang to the glory of the Triune

God for centuries. Think of the categorical denial by the Muhammadans (Muslims) in their books and in their creed of all that makes Christianity Christian, and the arrogant denial of Christ's messengers and disciples by closing doors once open, and of doors that have been barred and bolted for these thirteen centuries. "Where Christ was born in Bethlehem, five times a day they call the Faithful to Prayer. Where Muhammad was born at Mecca, no Christian has yet proclaimed the Gospel of Christ."

## The Doctrine of Accommodation

### II.

THE Archbishops' Commission on Doctrine did not set out fifteen years ago to produce a comprehensive statement of Christian belief; their task, as defined by a commentator, was "to determine the limits of permissible opinion," they "sought to trace the boundaries within which the wide liberty of statement, and of interpretation which has always been the glory of the Anglican communion is allowable."

It is a good thing the nation does not entrust the Church with its ordnance survey work, or we should have a job to find any boundaries at all on our maps, and those we did find would be not a little smudged. As we have already seen on the points we have covered, the Commission's idea of "permissible opinion" seems to be saying in effect, "You can believe just what you care to believe as long as you agree that the Church is a national necessity and should continue to receive its powers and privileges."

Is this desperate latitudinarianism surprising? What else could be expected of an attempt to graft post-Christian science on to pre-Christian creeds? Could any honest body of men, using their own intelligence as their instrument, and reason as their method, arrive at any detailed agreement on the precise interpretation they put on the absurdities and vacuities that are the creeds and doctrines of the Christian Church? Outside an authoritarian Church, such doctrines can live on in form only if the utmost latitude is allowed in their interpretation.

Unfortunately for me, this agree-to-differ spirit was not exactly prominent in one member of the Commission on certain occasions that we met earlier in the century in a headmaster's high-pitched corner study in a southern clime, when he considered that the doctrine of school discipline demanded the application of an instrument other than reason to an unresponsive part of my anatomy. Even in those days I felt strongly at such interviews that there was much to be said for the spirit of agreeing to differ. In the theological realm my mentor now seems to think likewise.

We have seen that in the gospel according to the Commission, an Anglican may believe just what he likes about the Bible, the resurrection (within limits), the papacy, the primacy, the future, and angels and demons. Now what about miracles? Can we agree about them? For if miracles are not a basic necessity for a religious belief of the Anglican variety, what is?

The report tells us:—

It is felt by many that miracle has a special value, in that it is a striking demonstration of the subordination of the natural order to spiritual ends, and affords particular points at which God's activity is manifested with special clarity and directness.

But:—

On the other hand, it is to be recognized that many others feel it to be more congruous with the wisdom and majesty of God that the regularities, such as men of science observe in nature and call the Laws of Nature, should serve His purpose without any need for exceptions on the physical plane.

To which the Archbishop of York, who was the Commission's visible chairman as deputy for God, adds:—

The reluctance of some to admit miraculous events, or the strictly miraculous character of events admitted, is based on the supposition not that God could not do such works, but that He would not. . . .

Some readers, including myself, would repudiate with vehemence the opinion that it is more congruous with the wisdom and majesty of God that He should never vary the regularities of nature . . . and we see no strictly religious interest in what we should rather regard as a monotonous uniformity; but some of our colleagues hold that view, and find that the grounds for it in their minds are such as to constitute a religious motive; and we have readily concurred in recognition of this fact.

The Anglican apparently may believe:—

(1) (a) The regularity and uniformity of nature (as we ignorant Freethinkers have so often been told) prove the existence of God as an intelligent controlling power;

(1) (b) Such regularity and uniformity are merely monotonous, and don't prove anything of the kind.

(2) (a) God works miracles;

(2) (b) God doesn't work miracles;

(2) (c) God won't work miracles, and probably never will, but he could if he wanted to, though he isn't likely ever to want to.

There's nothing like an agreement by which you "recognize" the other fellow's heresy provided he recognizes yours, so that both opposites form part of the "expression of a common mind."

A miracle may or may not occur, and if it occurs it may or may not be believed in, but whichever way you have it, it isn't a miracle at all, anyhow; it is merely a variation:—

A miracle, if it occurs, is not a breach of order, but expresses the purpose of God, which also determines the order of nature. It is therefore nothing irrational or capricious.

What use to either priest or worshipper is a God who can work miracles but won't? Who cares about a God who never intervenes in human affairs? And if God runs the whole show, why is it more "miraculous" that he should do something "irregular" than that he should be responsible for the entire "regular" routine? If all things are within his power, and he can do one thing as easily as another, are not all things, regular or irregular, either equally miraculous, or equally non-miraculous? These pertinent points, however, did not come within the Commission's terms of reference—they merely had to shuffle the cards, it is up to us to "find the lady."

Closely linked with miracles are prayers. No miracles, no prayers, should be the honest way of doing business with God; no help in human affairs, no gold, no frankincense and myrrh. But not so with the Christian, especially the professional Christian. If there be no intervention by God, what is the need for a Church? Whereas if people go on believing in prayers, even though the prayers don't affect the scheme of things one iota, they will still go on believing in Churches; and after all, that is what matters—to the Churches.

So in discussing prayer for the dead, the Commission emphasizes that "all Christian prayer aims at being prayer that God's will may be done"; and tells us: "Prayer for the Departed is not, any more than any other prayer, an attempt to persuade or suggest to God some action that it was not already His will to take."

Well, I give it up! Everything can go on taking its natural course, but the Christian should spend a

large part of his life earnestly praying to God that he does not do anything except what he had intended to do anyway, and let things happen just as they would happen if nobody bothered to pray at all. And the thought did not seem even to strike the Commission, "Mother, is it worth it?"

The Commission prayed to God to guide them every time they met, "that God's will may be done." But the Commission thought God's will would be done in any case; and their report, as being part of the expression of God's will, would presumably have been word for word the same if none of them had spent a single moment in prayer throughout those past fifteen years.

To suggest that God's will cannot be done unless he gets permission from Christians in their prayers is surely blasphemous? It makes prayer necessary to God. To suggest the report would be exactly the same, prayer or no prayer, is definitely blasphemous. That would make prayer unnecessary. To suggest that if the "right attitude" had not been inculcated by prayer, the Commission would not have been able to produce such a good report, is rank blasphemy, implying that if it had not been for the Commission's co-operation God's will would have been imperfectly expressed.

What nonsense men will talk, believe or accept if only they think God is inspiring them. To spend one's life praying that nothing shall be in the least different from what it would be if one did not pray at all, seems to be a height of futility that only belief in a God can enable one to scale.

The moving finger writes; and, having writ,  
Moves on: nor all thy piety nor wit  
Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,  
Nor all thy tears wash out a line of it,

wrote the immortal Omar, and now, centuries afterwards—centuries of the deepest Christian superstitions—the bold brave spirits of the Anglican Church agree with him. Except that they have neither the courage nor the mental honesty of the poet-seer of Persia; for what they say in effect is, You *can* pray for miracles, but it won't make any difference, because God *could* work them, but he won't.

Direct address to departed saints must not be condemned as a private practice "provided this be to ask for their prayers whether for ourselves or for others; anything other than this seems to us both perilous and illegitimate." And then:—

But also it is impossible to have well-grounded assurance that the saints hear us, so that direct address to them may well be thought inappropriate in the official worship of the Church.

Provided you are prepared to accept the risk yourself of whether the saints do or do not hear you, you can pray to the saints (present whereabouts unknown), but only to ask them to pray for you or somebody else; and the net effect of your prayers, and their prayers, and your prayers for their prayers, is that nothing happens in this world except what would have happened in any case if all the Christians and saints in Christendom had been struck dumb.

Of what more use is the providence controlled by this new God of the Anglicans than:—

. . . that inverted bowl we call the sky,  
Whereunder crawling coop't we live and die,  
Lift not thy hands to it for help—for it  
Rolls impotently on as thou or I?

Except that the Church says, Well, the ultimate result is the same, but don't bother your head with that side of the question; let us agree to differ, and you go on lifting your hands to God and the Church just the same.

Let us on this leave the last word with that

eleventh-century intellect whom superstition had not corrupted nor misdirected reason dulled:—

Myself when young did eagerly frequent  
Doctor and saint, and heard great argument  
About it and about: but evermore  
Came out by the same door as in I went. . . .

Oh, come with old Khayyam, and leave the wise  
To talk; one thing is certain, is life flies;  
One thing is certain, and the rest is lies;  
The flower that once has blown for ever dies.

RONALD STANDFAST.

## The Phantom Creed

If there is one thing least understood to-day, it is Christianity. Christianity began in a hope and is ending in a regret. The one thing certain about Christianity is that there is nothing certain about it. Christians agree in only one thing—that they don't. For a religion that we are told has given to Europe everything worth while this is at least odd.

It is, if we approach Christianity as a religion. If we approach it historically and scientifically, however, it ceases to be peculiar when its place in the scheme of things becomes clear. Religion has been nature's safety valve for centuries. Religion is the result of a "wish-fulfilment" on the part of mankind. It has been an escape from reality. Just as some men actually left family, possessions, and friends to "seek God" in some hermit's cave, so mankind made its "ivory tower" of shelter from the carking cares of the daily toil.

One reason why the churches are emptying is because we have more means of escape to-day. Its place is being taken by the cinema. Screen stars are ousting the heavenly angels. Why listen to some preacher gloating of glory when you can have three hours of "Pennies from Heaven" for ninepence? Why bother with the shadow of religion when you can have the more realistic shadow of Hollywood even if it is just as unsubstantial? Most people don't, and the churches are losing in consequence.

And that is why the organized churches are opposing Sunday cinemas. They are fighting the new menace from the west. They are raising their voices against the new "Yellow Peril" of the "Blonde Bombshells." Most parsons don't know much about Freud, but they know instinctively that a happy man is rarely religious.

A question often asked in other times was: "What are you going to put in its place?" There is no need to answer that nowadays. There are about a score of things in its place from football pools to study circles. Of course the churches protest against these things, but with as much success as a Salvation Army lassie would get with a collecting box in a dole-queue at Aberdeen.

No, religion is a little bit old fashioned. It doesn't belong to the machine-age at all. It smells of the barnyard, the ploughed field, and the milking shed. It has the tang of the soil. It is earthy and primitive, and we have everywhere lost contact with the soil. It seemed right to praise God for a fine catch of fish, a bounteous crop of corn, and it would even be worth praying for a heavy yield of the vine, but who ever thought of giving thanks for a record output of tins-plates or for the biggest production of steel bars in ten years? Besides, nowadays, half the fish will probably be thrown back into the sea, and the coffee crop burned, and the wheat allowed to rot ungathered.

Everyone—except possibly an officer of the Salvation Army—will see the daftness of first praying for

a good crop and then destroying it. A modern farmer if he prays at all, prays for a bad crop which will send up prices. Because, by the delightful inadequacies of our commercial system, which the Pope assures us has the blessings of Almighty God, the more you produce the poorer you are, and unless the workers of Britain are not careful, they will work themselves into the dole-queue. Which makes it harder to trust in God.

And perhaps explains where religion stands in an industrial era. It doesn't. Religion has no function; the parson has no place. There are new ways of escape and other forms of belief.

Don't think we are blind to the dangers of these substitutes. In fact they have all the dangers of religion. The worship of a Hitler, a Mussolini, or a Stalin, is not better than the worship of Christ. But it must not be forgotten, even Socialists have offended in this respect. How many Socialist speakers try and make an appeal on reasonable grounds? Very few. By their emotional attacks on the Capitalists and their system, they actually hamper progress. The working class, emotionally exhausted by having something to hate, find themselves impotent. And how often can the mass-emotion thus generated be diverted to other channels? Very often.

It has been stated that the root causes of jingoism and pacifism are the same. And we know how easily a pacifist can be turned into a roaring tearing patriot, as the last war proved. It would be invidious to mention names, but the reader ought easily to remember dozens who threw over the convictions of a life-time.

Dogmas and principles as such are not the driving force of any institution but the amount of emotional drive behind them. You cannot explain the history of Europe by Christianity, because it might so easily have been something else. Europe might have been quite easily a Jewish continent. In the days of the early church, the Jews were making as many converts as the Christians. Christians were looked upon by the Romans, as a sect of the Jews. Like all sects, the two hated each other bitterly.

What they had to offer was pretty evenly divided. The Jews said their Messiah was coming, when their enemies would have a pretty thin time, and the Christians said He had come, and gone away, but He was coming back again, when *their* enemies would have a bad time.

They were both making converts amongst the slaves of the Roman Empire. Events might have led to the Jewish faith becoming the official religion, but Christianity won by a short head. If the Jews had won it would not have made the slightest difference to European history. It would not have stopped one war, or started one more revolution. There would have been no difference except a verbal difference. The breeding of pigs would not have reached its present high level. And naturally, there would be no Pig Marketing board in Britain to-day.

The difference would be solely one of names. A story is told of the late Czar of Russia that when he came to walk in his garden before breakfast one day, he greeted the sentry at the door with the usual Russian good morning, "Christ is risen." The sentry who was one of the chosen, sprang to attention and cried, "Christ is not risen!"

Would that story have altered much if the Czar had said, "Christ will come," and the sentry had answered, "Christ has come"? If England had been Jewish, would it have prevented the rise of the British Empire? If the Spaniards had been Jews would they have refrained from destroying the Aztec Empire of Montezuma? What difference would it have made except that through the long years of Jewish history, one small collection of people, welded

together by the buffets of religious persecution and theological arrogance, would have been the target of popular resentment and anger, at once suffering the oppression of princes and being made the excuse for oppression. Of them it would be truly said, suffering is the badge of their tribe. Yes even in the enlightened twentieth century the poor despised Christians would have to suffer the anger of some Hitler, to make a German holiday. If every church remembered that, there would be no persecution, but if every church remembered that, there would be no church.

IDRIS ABRAHAM.

## A Clachan Mourns

WHERE the tumbling Garnock water unites the wayward river Irvine to join the restless sea, Death leapt with a swift ferocity to hurl six unwitting souls to Eternity.

On Thursday afternoon, two days after the anniversary of the birth of Scotland's beloved poet, I was an eye-witness of a disaster which only Death will erase from my mind. I was on the Irvine bank of the Garnock, and could see the town of Irvine silhouetted against the clear, wintry sky; looking across the wide river mouth I had a splendid view of the Stevenston end of Nobel's Explosive Works, a favourite haunt of death in its most ghastly form.

As Davis has said, "we have no time to stand and stare." I was carrying on with my work, the Januar' win' had taken a rest that day, it sighed fitfully like a man in a troubled sleep, as if all its force had been spent in rousing the sleeping seas and driving the rain-laden clouds; the sun shone coldly as it began to sink behind the ragged, chimney-masked horizon of the main factory.

Behind me was the Bogside Race-course, beyond that the tall chimney of Cunninghame Home ejected a cloud of smoke; it was our "time signal." We were surmising what the inmates were getting for their "three o'clock," when one of my mates, a new hand, cried out, "Great Christ, whit's you?"

I looked over the Garnock and saw a great cloud of smoke, it was shaped like a fan with an awful design of curves and valleys like a great thunder cloud. A hellish flame appeared like a gigantic, scintillating ruby, with a glow which rivalled the "Aurora" in brilliance. When the flame had reached a height of about two hundred and fifty feet, the terrific concussion reverberated over the shocked heavens till it died away beyond the distant Cunnock Hills.

The screaming wild sea-birds, terror-stricken, flew aimlessly till their instinct took command, and they flew off from the scene. We were no less scared than the birds. We had just regained control of our trembling limbs when a more hellish flame obscured the dying sun, and a second mighty column of smoke and debris went soaring skyward. I saw one large piece like a body pitching and tossing in a rough sea before it, too, lost its upward momentum and went hurtling down to earth.

Alas! "it" would never be the *whole body* of a worker. The only body found intact was that of the woman victim. I knew her as a cheery girl, and the eldest of six—she was the breadwinner; the mother is a widow.

Can money compensate such a loss to a grief-stricken home? How tragic to think of Lizzie leaving her home as usual with a gay smile on her lips, never again to return. Oh for the pen of an Ingersoll to speak words of comfort to the widow, whose heart is torn with anguish, whose one thought is that, from hundreds of girls, her beloved was picked out by a malign fate to die so swiftly sure.

And what of those who mourn for the men? They, too, are stricken with grief. Christianity is a sham philosophy; it gives to grief a sharper edge. God is neither good nor bad, he simply does not exist. Among the five workers who answered Death's imperious finger was one Christian. Belief in Jesus Christ was his sole interest in

life. My heart bleeds for his folks. What must they think of a God who "moves in a mischievous way. His blunders to perform"?

What of the victim whose hobby was photography? Doubtless he looked forward to the summer months to indulge himself to his heart's content. Now there is a vacant chair in six obscure homes in an Ayrshire clachan. Burns has called Death "the poor man's dearest friend, the kindest and the best." But death is only welcome to kindest and the best." But death is only welcome to those who linger in pain and poverty. When it comes in such a horrible guise as it came on that Thursday afternoon a whole community is shocked.

The factory at Ardeer has a recreation club, which had prepared to celebrate by holding the Annual Burns' Supper. The Supper and Dance was postponed; it had been fixed for Friday, 28th. On Saturday, 29th, five of the funerals wended their melancholy way to Stevenston Cemetery; the sixth was on Sunday and was attended with full Masonic honours.

I tender my heartfelt sympathy to those most deeply affected by the disaster. The victims went to work with a ready smile, they were preparing to finish their output for the day when their whole Universe was blotted out. The "fireside climes" of six bereaved homes will be less by one. No more will a hand reach for a pipe or a spill to light a fag. No more will Lizzie titivate herself before the glass preparing for the dance or the "pictures." Let these be the homely memories which will stand out clearer when the blackness of grief gives place to the hope that our workmates left without a moment's suffering. The anguish they leave behind will lose its poignancy. The happier memories will survive when the sad ones are relegated to the limbo of things forgotten. For Memory is the only friend that Grief can call its own.

HUGO.

## Correspondence

### RUSSIA AND ANTI-SEMITISM

#### TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—In your issue of February 20 Anti-Duhring says: "I challenge Mr. Kerr to quote me any authority whereby Jews have been executed in Russia, as Jews."

I never for a moment suggested that men had been executed or otherwise punished in Soviet Russia because they were Jews. What I asserted, and again assert, is that Jews occupy a remarkably prominent place among those who have been executed or punished. I believe there is no doubt that Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin, and Radek are (or were) Jews, but these names include all the ablest Bolsheviks except Lenin and Stalin. Many others only less prominent have been Jews.

I cannot regard it as a mere accident that all these men have been Jews. The prominence of Jews in modern revolutionary movements is beyond all dispute. In the German Socialist movement Marx, Lassalle, Kautsky, Bernstein, Singer, and (I think) Rosa Luxemburg, were all Jews. There have been many Jewish leaders in the movement in other countries.

My essential point is that the Jews have always been a zealous and restless people, and that these qualities have brought them into conflict with the authorities in a great many countries. In ancient times they indulged in religious fanaticism and intolerance: now they are more addicted than any other people to revolutionary enthusiasm. Twenty years ago the Jews were the brains of the Russian revolution; now they are the brains of the very considerable element in Russia which is dissatisfied with the results of the revolution.

R. B. KERR.

### CHRISTIAN MORALITY AND VENEREAL DISEASE

SIR,—In Mr. Standfast's letter, which you published on February 13, he made a statement which must make me appear to be an out-and-out moral snob! Mr. Standfast did not mean this, I am sure, as he and I have been in personal letters arguing in a friendly way, this matter

of the prevention of venereal disease

I should never dream of assuming that this Association (the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene) or I myself were more "moral" than people who hold different and perhaps contrary opinions. Honest differences of opinion do not imply morality or immorality on the part of the persons concerned.

Perhaps I may add that this Association is definitely pledged to be "independent of any political party, philosophical school or religious creed," and that this principle of independence is loyally upheld even although it is true that probably the majority of our members and Committee hold the Christian idea of morality.

It does not seem necessary for me to add anything further, but thank you very much for your courtesy in publishing my letter.

ALISON NEILANS.

## National Secular Society

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD FEBRUARY 17, 1938

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

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

Minutes of previous meeting read and accepted. Monthly Financial statement presented. New members were admitted to West London, Liverpool, Birkenhead, and North Shields Branches, and the Parent Society.

The President reported that his lecture in Edinburgh was successful in every way, and showed that local prospects were very encouraging. The President met members of the Glasgow Branch on the Saturday evening, during which details of the Conference and other matters were discussed. Correspondence was dealt with from Edinburgh, World Union of Freethinkers, West London Branch, North East Federation of N.S.S. Branches, also a report concerning the McCluskey Estate. Aspects of open-air work for the coming season were discussed, and the Secretary instructed. Suggestions were made for the formation of a study circle. The next meeting of the Executive was fixed for Thursday, March 17, and the proceedings closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,

General Secretary.

## Branch News

### WEST LONDON BRANCH

THE debate between Mr. George Bedborough and Father Dunstan Pontifex, last Sunday, attracted a crowded audience, who listened with great interest and attention to the very capable presentations made by the disputants for their respective cases. Mr. Bedborough was at the top of his form, and he had little difficulty in showing that the answer to the question "Is Prayer Futile?" was in the affirmative. He did this with his usual good humour and witty remarks. Fr. Pontifex—also in the best of humour—put up a clever defence for an impossible case. Today (February 27) Mrs. Seaton-Tiedeman is the speaker, and no doubt will attract a large audience for her interesting subject.—H.C.

Uncomfortably crowded once in a London bus, Edmund Gosse said to his companion, W. M. Rossetti, "I understand you are an anarchist." "I am an Atheist," replied Rossetti in a loud voice. "My daughter is an anarchist." A sufficient number of people left the bus indignantly to make Gosse and Rossetti comfortable.

Harry Emerson Fosdyk,  
"The Secret of Victorious Living."

## 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

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.

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.

#### INDOOR

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH (Alexandra Hotel, South Side, Clapham Common, S.W.4): 7.30, Father Vincent McNabb, O.P.—"The Bible as 'Text-Book of Social Science.'"

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Professor G. E. G. Catlin, M.A., Ph.D.—"Ends and Means."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, Mrs. M. Seaton Tiedeman—"The Churches and Divorce."

### COUNTRY

#### INDOOR.

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane): 7.0, R. H. S. Standfast (Hon. Sec. N.W. Federation N.S.S.)—"Where is this God?"

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Laycock's Forum, Albion Court, Kirkgate): 7.15, Mr. E. Walker—"A Desirable Government."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. J. Clayton.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Freegardeners' Hall, Picardy Place): 6.45, Mrs. Muriel Whitehead—"What Free-thought Means to Me."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Dr. James Dunlop—"What Happens When We Die?"

GREENOCK BRANCH N.S.S. (Shepherd's Hall, Regent Street): 7.30, Muriel Whitefield—A Lecture.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. E. Harry Hassell—"The Pillars of Society," by Ibsen.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Islington, Liverpool, entrance in Christian Street): 7.0, J. Wingate (Perth)—"The Poetic and Spiritual Side of War."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. ("King's Café," Oxford Road): 7.0, Mr. J. H. Black—"Virtue, Christianity and the Fundamentals."

COULD any Branch, or reader, make good use of back numbers of the *Freethinker*? From 1905 to present date; good condition; free for postage.—R. OLIVER, 52 Arden Street, Earlsdon, Coventry.

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