

THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED by CHAPMAN COHEN •

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Views and Opinions

More about the Godless Conference

ONE may assume that Sir Samuel Hoare's "dear Ramsay" (Captain A. H. Ramsay, M.P.), may at least console himself with the reflection that his ignorance of the most elementary principle of English law is shared by sixty-nine other men who have found their way into the House of Commons. One may well wonder what seventy-men of this calibre are doing in a legislative assembly all of them apparently believing that the Home Secretary had the power—he has confessed to having the inclination—to prevent a "godless congress." Godless conferences have been going on in this country for generations, and the Corporation of Glasgow, only the other day, formally and officially welcomed one, and in so doing set an example of social equity that not many are likely to imitate. Certainly they will not do so if a certain type of Christian is able to prevent it. But a man who does not know that a meeting of Atheists is quite legal in this country (in spite of blasphemy laws), as are meetings for the propagation of Atheism, should attend a night school, not pose as a legislator in the House of Commons. And to tell the lie that this particular congress is aiming at preaching Communism, as though that were a legal offence, is to exhibit further ignorance. For there is no law to prevent the propagation of Communism. It is quite legal for meetings to be held, speeches to be made, and papers issued for the purpose of propagating Communism or any other political or social 'ism. "Dear Ramsay" may not be aware of it, but there is even a Christian Communism as well as an Atheistic one. I do not agree with either, but I hope I should ask for fair-play for both. When I find an opinion with which I do not agree I argue against it; I do not squeal for a policeman to suppress it. But perhaps Captain Ramsay is an admirer of Hitler. If that is so both his want of knowledge and of courage, where opinions are concerned, may be understood.

Ourselves and Others

Having had his political education advanced to the extent of learning that Atheism in this country is not an indictable offence, Captain Ramsay has announced that he intends to introduce an Aliens' Restrictions (Blasphemy) Bill. This Bill makes it an offence (we suggest as penalties, the rack, boiling oil and similar Christian methods of persuasion) for any alien in this country to deliver speeches calculated to bring the Christian or any other form of religion into contempt, or to publish or distribute propaganda for that purpose. British people are not affected by this Bill. We breathe freely, we can go on with our propaganda, and the *Freethinker* will continue to appear. If Captain Ramsay had lived in early England, one can imagine him calling upon the chief of the Druids to decree that those aliens who had landed with a religion that was based upon the teachings of an alien, should be at once deported or forced to hold their tongue. For the benefit of Captain Ramsay I must explain that Jesus Christ was a foreigner, and those who brought Christianity here were also foreigners. Christianity is an alien product. Of course, seeing that Hitler holds that Jesus Christ was an "Aryan," Captain Ramsay may believe that Jesus was a Scotchman—unless he agrees with Heine that all Scotchmen are Jews, born too far North. But somehow I cannot picture Captain Ramsay reading Heine.

My patriotism is not of the cheap flag-wagging type, and I resent the implied insult to the British people that this proposed Bill carries, and if I were a believer in God I should resent it on that ground also. I do not agree that foreigners have stronger intellects and greater controversial powers than have Britishers. Fools are as common in Germany as they are here, and intellects are as keen here as they are in Germany. If a man wishes to tell me something which he believes to be true, I object very strongly to a Captain Ramsay suggesting that I am quite unable to distinguish for myself the true from the false, and that I need him to guard me against the said opinion. In spite of Captain Ramsay being a Briton, I believe there are brains as keen in this country as there are in Italy or Germany. Or, if Captain Ramsay means that he wishes to keep foreigners from talking in this country because they are more villainous than are British people, then I object to that on the grounds that British scoundrels are not remarkably different from foreign ones. A blackguard is a blackguard wherever he is found, and the same is true of stupidity.

And if I believed in a God I should object to Captain Ramsay's Bill even more strenuously. I should have no use for a God who cannot stand up against a foreigner. It used to be said that a single Englishman was a match for three or four foreigners. Now we are told that when it comes to arguments in favour of Atheism while God can stand against an Englishman, he must be backed up by a policeman when it is a

foreigner who is talking. What is Captain Ramsay aiming at? Is he a foreigner in disguise, that he so under-estimates the intellectual qualities of an Englishman? Why this unnecessary insult to Britons? Or does he think so poorly of God that he wishes him to have police protection against some clever aliens?

I could appreciate Captain, or Herr, Ramsay's concern if his Bill provided that no one, be he British or other, should say anything or do anything that would promote the spread of "atheistic beliefs." That at least places British people on a level with non-British. But to say by Act of Parliament that God can protect himself against the arguments of an Englishman, but is helpless against the assaults of a German or a Russian, an Italian or an American, is holding God up to ridicule. Captain Ramsay's Bill provides against these superior foreigners bringing "the Christian or any other form of religion into contempt." But why should Captain Ramsay have the benefit of an Act which is really bringing religion into contempt? The Atheist says that religion is not true. Captain Ramsay does not say religion is untrue, he says it is so contemptible that it cannot exist without an Act of Parliament to protect it against criticism.

* * *

God and the Police

Captain Ramsay has a follower, or a teacher, in the person of Major-General Sir Walter Maxwell-Scott. He also wishes to have a bodyguard of policemen to protect God Almighty. He also is very angry with the Home Secretary, because he is compelled by law to leave the "Godless Conference" alone. This fire-eating "modern Major-General" was the principal speaker at a pilgrimage to Dumfermline in honour of St. Margaret, and he asked:—

Did the Home Secretary not realize that the authority of a Government came from God? He already had God's authority to prevent God being insulted.

That, in Sir Walter Maxwell-Scott's opinion (he appears to be as ignorant of the law as is Captain Ramsay), should be enough. Sir Samuel Hoare ought to go ahead and, in the name of God, forbid the Congress. But, unfortunately—it may be in consequence of foreigners being permitted to speak in England, or of their writings being allowed to circulate in England—there are the courts to deal with. And if a man was brought before a court charged with teaching Atheism, the judge might ask under what Act of Parliament was the charge made. And if the reply was that God was being insulted, the judge might point out that even under the Common Law of Blasphemy it was not God who is considered but the feelings of Christians; they are protected because it is felt that the feelings of numbers of Christians are so little under the control of their intelligence that there might be a breach of the peace unless the law protected them. But if God feels insulted at an Atheistic Congress being held, then, British law says, God must look after himself. So far British law says with the great Emperor Augustus, "Let the gods guard their own honour." Sir W. Maxwell-Scott and Capt. Ramsay say, in effect, they can't. The gods have no more thunderbolts to hurl, they have no more diseases with which to infect, they can no longer strike the blasphemer with blindness or rob him of his speech. It is the policeman or nothing. God has to be "protected" from insult. He can no longer protect himself.

* * *

Our Primitives

But Sir W. Maxwell-Scott has in stating a Roman Catholic truth—which is just a common human lie—unconsciously given us a generalization from anthro-

pology which is of some importance. The Roman lie is that Governments have, or should have, their authority from the Church, and when the New Testament says the powers that be are ordained of God, and whoso resists them deserves damnation, the reference is to the dominion of the Church. But there is another side to the statement. Governments, like many other social institutions, have their conscious beginning in the shadow of religion. Where everything is attributed to ghostly influence or action the leadership of a tribe belongs to him who is either nominated by or is an incarnation of the tribal joss. How this superstition lingers was illustrated in the magical service in Westminster Abbey at the Coronation of George VI. At a very early stage of primitive life Government derives its authority, as it still does among the more primitive savages, from "God." Also the god must be protected from "insult" because if he is insulted God runs amok and punishes the whole of the tribe for the offence that has been given him. This stage of culture is well illustrated in the Old Testament with its death sentence on anyone who offends the gods, and in the pestilences and diseases and withholding of the harvest of a whole people for an offence given by a few. It is also exemplified in the origin of blasphemy laws, although these have now become almost the equivalent of a charge of "drunk and disorderly" at least at common law, for no one can be found guilty of blasphemy unless he is likely to bring about a breach of the peace. The "insult to God Almighty" has almost died out.

In a sense, then, Sir Walter Maxwell-Scott has the authority of his Church, and also of the Bible and of the New Testament, when he says that the Government receives its authority from God, although books on the British Constitution say it comes from the ordinary voter, who may be anything from an Atheist to a throw-back to the primitive such as Captain Ramsay his 69 followers, and Sir Walter Maxwell-Scott. And, if that be true, when we look at the men who constitute the Governments we have, we may reverse the old saying, and argue that if true the theory removes a great responsibility from the shoulders of the electorate. We are not responsible. Mr. Chamberlain and Sir John Simon and Sir Samuel Hoare are "acts of God." If God can stand his representatives, he surely might put up with a three days Conference of Freethinkers.

I must confess that men such as Sir Walter Maxwell-Scott and Captain Ramsay and his sixty-nine legislators have a great attraction for me. They supply a missing link for those who are interested in the study of primitive life. It is one thing to see the physical remains of our most primitive ancestors; to study the remnants of their physical structure, the kind of implements they used, the kind of dwelling-places they had, even what is left of the kind of food they ate. The difficulty is to re-create the thoughts that ran through their brains, to get a clear idea of the view of life they held, to know just how they would face the life of to-day. After all, civilization is mainly a matter of psychological heredity, and the farther advanced society becomes the greater the gap between them and us. If we could cover with flesh and blood the physical remains that we have of our very primitive ancestors, we can imagine how our world would seem to them with its mechanical modes of locomotion, our telephones and aeroplanes, our submarines and wireless telegraphy. They would wander in amazement among the scientific products of their descendants. We should verily seem to them like gods walking.

But if they were introduced to an assembly such as that which was addressed by Sir W. Maxwell Scott, if

they could have witnessed the coronation ceremony in Westminster Abbey, if they could see sixteen men prostrate before a priest, who, in the name of their God, is endowing them with "spiritual power," if they were asked to join in a protest against the god being offended or insulted, all these and similar things they would understand readily. They would be at home, and thank their own God that he had preserved such examples of the life they lived. Captain Ramsay and his followers would be their brethren in the spirit, truly representative of the social life of uncivilized mankind.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Challenging Cocksurenness

"We shall never enfranchise the world without touching people's superstitions, for the evil principle will remain to develop into new forms of oppression."

G. W. Foote.

It is a curious circumstance that the less men know about a subject the more cocksure they are in their statements concerning it. This is especially the case with regard to religion. Creeds are as numerous as "leaves in Vallombrosa," and religion is the chosen domain of the cocksure. From the Romanists to the latest imported American revivalist, they are all as dogmatic as a College of Cardinals. They are so much in love with their own opinions, so confident that they are quite right, and all other people are so very wrong, that they tend to become public nuisances. Differing from one another as the poles asunder, they are absolutely certain that they are right. With them mere opinion became certitude, and an unlettered man, converted overnight, is ready to convert the world to his own peculiar way of thinking without checking up the grounds of his belief in any form or shape. Wallowing in his own ignorance, he regards all who have the honour of differing from him with high-sniffing contempt.

A change, however, is taking place. The area of cocksureness is not so wide as it used to be. Forces are at work to-day which will, in the long run, dissipate most of this ignorance. This Stone-Age atmosphere is becoming permeated with subtler, more delicate, intellectual influences. And the chief factors in this silent revolution have been the growth of education, and the spread of scientific knowledge. It has taken many generations to challenge the cocksureness of the Churches, and the work has been frustrated at every turn by the machinations of Priestcraft.

When national education was introduced in the "seventies" of the last century, the clergy were furious, and used every weapon in their armoury to defeat the project. Their desire was to keep the people ignorant and in subjection. The massive, money-making edifice of priestly authority had been built on popular ignorance. So much was this the case, that the real reason for forcing State Education was the grim fact that the people of England were then largely illiterate. This state of affairs happens after fifteen centuries of priestly rule, so absolute that a man often risked his liberty and even his life, in standing up to the clergy. For in the real Ages of Faith and ignorance men were not only excommunicated, but actually burnt alive for heretical opinions. The only position adopted by priests at the height of their tyranny was "Believe what we say, or be damned." How different are things in our day. The very conception of an absolute right and wrong has perished from the intellectual world. To-day only

the Cave-men of religion are cocksure. In plain language, no one worth mentioning, no one with a reputation to lose, is so cocksure as prelates and priests pretended to be in the Ages of Faith.

Of course, priests have been showmen too long to admit failure publicly. The very year, 1870, that saw the inauguration of national education in England, was the time selected for the promulgation of the dogma of Papal Infallibility in Rome. It may have been a novelty; most certainly it was a mistake. For, since the Roman Pontiff claimed infallibility, his office has become of less importance year by year, and to-day he stands the Rip Van Winkle among the ecclesiastical patriarchs. In England, which a Papal predecessor had hopes of reconverting to Catholicism, Romanism has sunk to the level of the Salvation Army, whilst in Germany and Austria the Catholic Church is fighting for its very existence against a newer form of religion, supported by bayonets and brute force.

As has been well said, freedom of thought in religion is a thermometer for freedom of thought in general. The publication of Paine's *Age of Reason* is remarkable, because it was the first important book challenging Priestcraft in this country. It is true that Christianity had been attacked previously, but this was the first occasion that the attack had been made so that it could be understood by the ordinary citizen. It was not only a thunderous engine of revolt, but it was a live book on publication, and still remains so. Published in the eighteenth century, prosecuted with the utmost rigour of the law, proscribed by the clergy, the book has sold steadily right through the nineteenth century and through nearly four decades of the present century, and is still making fresh readers every day. Paine's works are still an inspiration. "Where liberty is, there is my country," said Benjamin Franklin, and Paine's magnificent answer was, "Where is not liberty, there is mine." In his superb reply to Edmund Burke's rhetorical tirade against the French Revolution, in which he reserved his compassion for the aristocracy, Paine said: "Mr. Burke pities the plumage, but he forgets the dying bird." Fine writing as it is, the thought is finer. It embodies the watchwords of Democracy, the marching music that drove forth Paine himself as a knight in shining armour, that sent Lafayette to America, and Byron to Greece, and inspired the poets from Shelley to Swinburne.

Darwin's *Origin of Species*, another epoch-making book, was published in 1859. Its author was fifty years of age, and he had devoted twenty years of his life to this great work. Darwin was a quiet man, a modest scholar, one of our greatest biologists. Although no one was more surprised than he at the tumult the publication of his book caused, his work altered the whole view-point of the intellectual world. The general admission of evolution sweeps away the old Biblical legends which men have been taught to regard as sufficient explanation of all things. The legend of a fallen race at once disappears, and with it goes the myth of the devil and his fireworks, and all other strange and monstrous explanations that were necessary to harmonize the theoretical theory foisted upon believers. With it, also, goes the Bibliolatry, which, like so many other idolatries, has served to enchain and cramp the human intellect. It was the greatest event since the Renaissance, that revival of learning after the darkness of the Middle Ages that followed the break up of the old Roman Empire. It was a landmark in the history of humanity, for it led to the broadening of men's minds and to further widening of the intellectual horizon.

To another great scholar, Gerald Massey, belongs

the credit of undermining the fraudulent pretensions of the Christian Religion, which, after all is said and done, remains the only form of religion in this country worth the serious consideration of reformers. Massey bent his energies to a scholarly and philosophic exposure of the greatest religious fraud of all the ages. His books, *The Book of Beginnings*; *The Natural Genesis*; *Ancient Egypt*; and other writings, have had to be reckoned with. For Massey traces the Christian cult back to Ancient Egypt, the Motherland of Superstition. He shows that the holy mother and child, the one a virgin, the other a god, were actually worshipped in Egypt many centuries before the Christian era, and the alleged birth of Christ. It was in Egypt, particularly, that the dogmas of early Christianity, and its myths and legends, were manufactured. In a weighty passage in *The Natural Genesis*, Massey says:—

The writer has not only shown that the current theology is, but also how it has been, falsely founded on a misinterpretation of mythology by unconsciously inheriting the leavings of primitive or archaic man and ignorantly mistaking them for divine revelations.

It was a strenuous task that this poet-scholar had imposed upon himself. In the noble, dedicatory verses to *The Natural Genesis*, he shows, with rare pathos, the isolation of a scholar's life. He compares himself to a deep-sea diver, whose friends watch anxiously for his return, and he concludes:—

"A willing slave for years,
I strove to set men free,
Mine were the labours, hopes, and fears,
Be theirs the victory."

Massey's life-work shows clearly that modern men are saturated with old-world superstitions, and that the wealthy religious bodies of our own day have their roots in the far-off times when priests rode rough-shod over the liberties of men, and common men were slaves in both mind and in deed, with minds as naked as their bodies.

These three great Freethinkers, each in their own way, broke the cocksureness of the Orthodox, which had been so carefully fostered by priests for centuries for their own material ends. Paine was the bravest of the three, for he made a frontal attack on Priestcraft at a time when it was highly dangerous to do so. Boldly he challenged the whole of the clergy of all Christendom to a duel to the death. It was a magnificent gesture by a truly great man. Darwin and Massey were more modest. The one propounded his theory, and the other published the results of his studies, but to-day all men with reputations to lose are evolutionists, and are more or less familiar with the savage survivals in modern religion. When these seminal ideas are no longer confined to a comparatively small number of educated men, and have become common property, it will be the beginning of the end of Priestcraft in this country. At such a time, when great questions have to be answered, may we deal with them with the same fervour as the great men we have been discussing:—

"Who knew the seasons when to take
Occasion by the hand, and make
The bounds of Freedom wider."

MIMNERMUS.

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To stand up straight and tread the turning mill,
To lie flat and know nothing and be still,
Are the two trades of man; and which is worse
I know not, but I know that both are ill.

"More Poems," A. E. Housman

The Bible in English

I.

SOME years ago, I was present at a discussion held by the Publicity Club of London, the object of which was to show the Church how to advertise its wares so as to rope in most of the people of England. Experts in advertising proved conclusively that if only they were allowed to "handle the business," the religious revival so earnestly prayed for by the pious would become an accomplished fact. I do not know what the couple of the Church's representatives were thinking when they heard all the speeches. But I do know that the experts were only proving how hopelessly ignorant they themselves were of the wily religious organization which calls itself the Church of Christ, an organization which, in the matter of real publicity, had forgotten more than a good many advertising agencies would ever learn.

The Church indeed has never ceased to advertise from the days when the early disciples could get enough fools to listen to them. It has never ceased to come before the people without a message of some kind. From thousands of pulpits every week, from pamphlets, and books, and articles, it has proclaimed its mission without pause for centuries. It has built magnificent edifices as standing memorials of its work; and it has called forth tremendous sacrifices from its followers, not merely in unflinching devotion, but in blood and money. And all this has been given such world-wide advertisement that millions of people really believe that the only religion that matters is Christianity.

Even attacks on the authenticity and credibility of the Bible, the great fetish of the Church, often were turned to its advantage. See, was the cry, how the Book—God's own Word—has survived every criticism and is still the world's best seller. The more it is proved to be untrue, the more it will be believed in. Nothing can prevail against it. And, of course, the "popular press" will print anything in favour of the Bible. It will give the partisan articles of priests and parsons pages of what are really advertisements for nothing. It will magnify archæological discoveries in the East as if they really proved Biblical stories; it will even pay high prices to get "experts" to write articles on the "truth" of the Bible. Some of us would like to see any scheme prepared by an advertising agency which could beat the way the Church manages to get advertisements free all over the world.

As a particular example of the kind of advertising for which Christianity has always been famous, look at the way in which the Bible is being boosted at the present moment. All this year there have been remarkable eulogies of the Bible as "literature." It is, naturally rather late in the day to get people, that is, educated people, to believe in devils, angels and miracles; so the portions of the Bible dealing with these absurdities are discreetly hidden in the background wherever possible. Readers are earnestly implored to study the Bible just as literature. The familiar verse-form of the chapters—which, of course, were never in the Word as God wrote it (that is if he wrote it)—is omitted, and one can now read the "Holy Story" just as another book. It is all very artful, but the reader can rest assured that he is not allowed to forget that what he is reading is the Bible and the "Holy" Bible at that. It can never be read just like another book except by Freethinkers. Anyone in whom a vestige of Christianity remains is bound to regard the Bible as something apart in literature. It is Holy Ground. And it is magnificent Publicity.

At the moment, a big heavenly splash is being made

with what is called the Fourth Centenary of the English Bible. The occasion is the "marvellous" event four hundred years ago, when the complete Bible in English was allowed to be read in all English Churches. Up till then, attempts had been made to get it translated into the common tongue; but, so we are told by Protestants and all those who secede from Popery, these translations were frowned upon by the Roman Catholic Church, and the translators either burnt, or otherwise executed, or imprisoned. The English people were hungry for God's Message, and insisted upon reading it, however surreptitiously. Hence, it is one of the greatest events in the history of England this bringing the Book to the People. This is briefly the story, which, in varying forms, is being forced upon newspaper readers all over the country.

The real truth is something very different. There is not a scrap of evidence that the English people were hungry for the Bible or cared very much either way four hundred years ago. It is doubtful whether 90 per cent of them could read at all. Those who could were able, as a rule, to read Latin, and they therefore could read the official version of the Bible, the translation known as the Vulgate, and which is still used by the Catholic Church. It is, of course, true that the latter objected to the translations which were being made; it claims that the men who were making them were incompetent to do so. And the fact that a dozen or so fresh versions were made in the course of the sixteenth century proves the Church was not altogether wrong.

Many portions of the Bible had been translated into English of a sort before Wycliff. This is admitted in the Preface to the Authorized Version. What became of them is not certain, but (in all probability) time and the destruction of many of the treasures in the monasteries of Henry VIII.'s day, account sufficiently for their disappearance. Rome, however, could not stomach Wycliff and those who helped him. They were heretics; they questioned Catholic doctrine, and Wycliff himself was inhibited from teaching the matters in dispute. And from Rome's point of view one cannot altogether blame religious authority. Heresy was a crime and had to be stamped out; it was stamped out wherever possible, but unfortunately it is hydra-headed, and no matter how often in the past the Church annihilated it in one place, it would break out in another. Wycliff's views says Dore, in his *Old Bibles*, "if carried into practice would have been totally subversive of morality and good order, but he never separated himself from the [Catholic] Church of England." It is obvious that this Church, under the circumstances, could not agree that Wycliff was a proper person to whom a translation of the Bible could be entrusted, and, however much later translations may have been indebted to him, these works had to disregard his heresies.

The real movement for translating the Bible into English came when printing was invented, about 1450. This discovery—perhaps the greatest in the history of mankind—made it possible to multiply easily, quickly, and comparatively cheaply, not only secular but pious literature, and the first book which came from the press at Mayence was what is known as the Guttenburg Bible—which, incidentally, is a most beautiful piece of typography. From that day, one can understand how some people, those particularly religious, even though they were heretics in the eyes of the Church of Rome, were determined to get the Bible in the hands of the "vulgar." Indeed, it was soon translated and printed into almost all European languages except English.

In Caxton's English translation of the *Golden Legend* (1483), there is also a translation of the five books of Moses and the Gospels, and the book, says

Dore, "may be considered the first printed English Bible." This possibly led to the Church considering the advisability of preparing an official English version of the complete Bible, but the idea was rejected. Whether this was unfortunate, as Dore thinks, he is still obliged to admit that "the universal desire for a Bible in England, we read so much of in most works on the subject, exists only in the imagination of the writers. So far from England then being a 'Bible-thirsty' land, there was no anxiety whatever for an English version at that time, excepting among a small minority of the people." But in the coming centenary celebrations I have an idea that this emphatic statement will not be given the light of that publicity for which the Church is so famous. The English people cried out from the depths of their Christian hearts for the Bible, and they never ceased till they got it. It is a beautiful, but quite untrue story.

H. CUTNER.

Economic and Social Patterns in Early Christianity

I.—THE OATH OBJECT

THE distinction drawn by Fraser and others between Magic and Religion conveniently expresses two stages in the development of man's ideas about the world. In magic by a rudimentary method of animistic analogies man thinks that he can master the world. In religion he distrusts his powers of mastery; personifies the forces of the unknown, both outside and inside, which are thwarting him; and seeks to achieve mastery after all by humbling himself before these forces, placating them, and coming into harmony with them. The animistic method of reasoning apparent in magic is not driven out by religion, but is lifted into a new level of consciousness where a part is discarded, but a part also given new energy. Religion requires the settled community, and, to attain anything like full complexity, a community in which commercialism has begun to be active. In every stage of religion we find abstracted the forms of social relationship general at the period, and prominent are inevitably those of economic contact. The ways in which Oath, Curse and Blessing provided centres of magical and religious emotion and ritual have been analysed at length by Westermarck and Crawley;¹ and to follow out the method by which the Embodied Oath operated as a potent source of religious forms, we should have to correlate it with the External Soul of the primitive and show the basis of animistic psychology common to both concepts. We are not concerned with that question here, but it is necessary to point out the important part played by the Oath Object as a focal point for magic and religion in early social stages, and to indicate the equally important part of the Oath in creating the forms and emotions necessary for commercial intercourse. The Oath Object becomes charged with magical power; and this concept, operating in a world of expanding social and economic relations, adds a moral sanction to the animistic fear. The new sense of moral compact acts on the general concept of deity, and ends by complicating the worshipper's sense of obligation and submission. This pattern is important for some of the analyses which we are to make.

II.—THE LOSS OF THE LAND

With the advent of commercialism and class-society the past becomes halloed with regret. To pre-

¹ *The Origin and Development of Moral Ideas*, by E. A. Westermarck; *Oath, Curse, and Blessing*, by Ernest Crawley.

commercial society we may give the generic name of the Clan, while recognizing the great variety of historical forms which we thereby draw under that term. For we need some general term for the manner of life to which men look back with increasing pang and sorrow as soon as they find themselves divorced from the soil, from direct and communal ownership in the sources of wealth. The emotion of a lost paradise comes into being; and this emotion is universal wherever commercialized relations arrive, however small and dwindling may have been in fact the extent of communal ownership which is supplanted.

Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there is no room, and ye be made to dwell in the midst of the land. . . . Ye have eaten up the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses. What mean ye that ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor? (Isaiah v. 8; iii. 14.)

That is the cry of anger which echoes through the centuries against the loss of the land. The idea of communal ownership is to be seen in the concept that the Land belonged to the tribal god, and must return to him on the Year of Jubilee; the land must not be sold in perpetuity, for it belongs to Yahweh and the people are strangers and sojourners with him.²

In Egypt the masses had been deprived of the land, but a stable control by the state was established; the serf could not make a direct protest such as the Hebrews, using the same theological idiom as that of Egypt, were driven to utter. In Egypt the sense of loss retreated into increasing fantasies of satisfaction after death, in the Blessed Fields of Ialu; but the suppressed anger of the common people took form in the myths and rituals of Osiris and the Judgment after Death. The Jews, striving to hold together under continuous strains and attacks, made a national weapon of the monotheism, which in Egypt did not find itself forced into conflict with the crowds of functional deities; and the moral problem of class-society kept forcing itself with full emphasis on their suffering attention. For this reason, when after the Cæsarian civil war the uprooted peasant and slave-masses of the Roman Empire needed an idiom of protest and hope, that idiom was provided most vitally by the Jews. Yet the pertinacity which had made the Jews the best exponents of the social dilemma made them cling to their national formulations and reject the new religion to which they had contributed so profoundly.

The dilemma ran briefly thus. Only the common bond, the source of all morality and human value, was worth while in life. Therefore to trust this bond must bring a man happiness. Yet, in fact, the common people who trusted were dispossessed from the land. But the man who was fortunate and who got the land must be the blessed of God, since God had graced him with the precious inheritance. The eloquent book of *Job* dramatizes with magnificent effect this moral problem, and finds no answer to it. How harmonize the belief that "the reward of humility and the fear of Yahweh is riches and honour and life" with the facts of life? "The princes are the companions of thieves; everyone loveth gifts and followeth after rewards; they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them." The land-owners "hate the good and love the evil," they grind the faces of the poor, they "eat the flesh of the poor and flay their skin off them." The rich men are full of violence, and cheat in every possible way.³ In the name of the

² Lev. xxv. 8. In my book *John Bunyan*, I analyse at length the form of these emotions in seventeenth century Dissent.

³ For first set of ideas, take 1 Kings iii. 13; Psa. cxii. 3; Prov. iii. 16; viii. 18; xiv. 24; xxi. 1, 4; Job xvi. 12. For the second, Isaiah i. 17; Micah. ii. 11. Ezek. xviii. 12, 13;

outraged bond the prophets demand and threaten justice for the poor. "The needy shall not always be forgotten; the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever." (Psalm ix.) Isaiah declares that judgment will come on those "who take away the right from the poor of the people." Ezekiel threatens death to the doer of abomination, the man who takes usury or profit. Zechariah demands "mercy and compassion" from every man to his fellow. Jeremiah threatens that the house built on unrighteousness will fall on its owner.

But threat and plea alike cannot solve the dilemma that that which should bless is that which betrays to loss, and that which should damn is that which gives present ease and security. This sense of conflict between the deepening bond and the facts of increasing exploitation is common to all class-society. For the contradiction going to the heart of that society is that the society develops productivity (the mechanism of plenty) by dispossessing and enslaving the masses; that every advance in the socialization of productive methods creates a deeper schism of discord in social relationships.

The crisis reflected by Christianity brought these emotions to a powerful head. On the one hand is the ceaseless denunciation of the rich, on the other the faith that trust in the bond will solve everything. Reject the world of fact, of undeniable injustice, and the bond will return in all its potency of plenty:—

No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought of your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than the meat and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet their heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they. . . .

Consider the lilies of the valley, how they grow; they toil not, neither do spin; and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? ⁴

Put literally into practice, this attitude would mean a return to pre-human life, with men gathering food like the birds. This rejection of a civilization which seems utterly unworthy had already been developed by the Cynics with something like logic. But there is more in the utterance of *Matthew* than a mere rejection. There is also a fantasy of plenty, which comes from the new powers of productivity that the unworthy society is bringing about. These new powers, which the sense of bond claims as its own, are abstracted into the fantasy of easy control of nature. A direct expression of this hope is to be seen in the Egyptian dreams of an easy afterlife which would reflect the present world without any of its inconveniences or toils. Or in the persistent folk-theme of a

Amos ii. 8; iii. 15; iv. 1; v. 11; viii. 4. The cry for justice is to be found in Egypt, but with less vehemence, though many early laments long anticipate the Hebrew Prophet's outcry over the loss of brotherhood and the advent of commercialism. It is noteworthy that the common sense of loss gathers round the deities of the agricultural "reborn year"; for it is the land that is lost. The periodic rebirth in the spring, the successful defeat of Death, Old Man Winter, ceases to satisfy; the knot is cut which tied the ritual to the people. The imagery is abstracted (for the land is lost, taken away, and the emotion must subsist as a thing-in-itself). Hence the way that judgment-fantasies grow up in the agricultural Mysteries.

⁴ Matthew vi. 25f. Compare Lev. xxvi. 3f.; Psa. civ. 14f.; Jer. xxxi. 28.

world where the rivers run milk, where the fish leap into the frying-pan and sausages grow on trees. A theme common to Greek comedy, the theme of the land of Cockayne and many medieval fantasies, of folk-tales all over the world.⁵

In early Christianity, where the sense of crisis is overwhelming, there is an insistence that faith must not on any account take thought for to-morrow. The very act of thinking about means will rob faith of its magical powers. "Get you no gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses; no wallet for your journey, neither two coats, nor shoes, nor staff." But it was not long before this message began to be diluted and rationalized into a mere counsel to have a certain amount of prudent trust:—

Be ye free from the love of money; content with such things as ye have. For himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee. So that with good courage we say, The Lord is my helper, I will not fear. What shall man do unto me? ⁶

Brave words, but no longer distinguishable from the exhortations of any non-Christian stoic to his heart.

⁵ See essay by Edgell Richmond (with quotations from Greek comic poets) in my translation of Aristophanes' *Women in Parliament* (Thesmophoriazmai).

⁶ Matthew x. 9f.; Heb. xiii. 5.

JACK LINDSAY.

(To be continued)

Acid Drops

The *Evening Standard* Radio Correspondent, Mr. Garry Allighan, says that one very probable consequence of Sir John Reith being shifted from the control of the B.B.C., and given a well-paid post in connexion with air-ammunitions, will be that the Sunday programme will be lightened. Mr. Allighan makes public what was fairly well-known beforehand, that the dismal Sunday programme, with its overdose of religion, was entirely the work of Sir John Reith. Brought up in the horrible environment of a strict Scotch minister's house, Sir John inherited a distorted sense of right and wrong that only orthodox Christianity can properly develop.

The religious epilogue was introduced by Sir John Reith, because he wanted the religious atmosphere of the Manse in which his nature was warped, and he longed for it as the dope-eater longs for his drug. He wished, it is said, for the air of the family gathering in which his father read the Bible, gave a prayer, the family sang a hymn. No one wishes to prevent Sir John Reith doing what he pleases, but when a man is given a public post he did little to deserve, enjoys a good salary, and uses his position to force upon the whole of the country his own narrow desires, he shows himself unworthy to be in any position of trust. He has shown a warped moral sense that only Christianity can successfully moralize. The one thing certain is that few at Broadcasting House will weep on his departure. What the staff will say in public will be different, we expect, from what they will say in private. It is expected that lighter music, and even variety, may now be heard on Sunday. Let us hope also that there will be fewer "fakes" foisted on the listening public than has been the case under the pious administration of Sir John Reith.

There will, of course, be the usual official "gush" when Sir John finally departs. Mr. Vernon Bartlett, writing in the *News-Chronicle*, says that Sir John Reith is thoroughly autocratic, criticism has always been hushed, and complaints are always put down to "agitators." The director has created an air of suspicion (an inevitable result with such a ruler); there is, says Mr. Bartlett "too much suspicion, too much fear that somebody else will be

thrust into one's job, too much sense of being spied upon . . . and for that Sir John Reith is to a great degree responsible." Mr. Bartlett writes from experience and, we fancy, he could say a deal more if he would. But if one has friends in high places, little else matters. That Sir John Reith knows full well.

Cardinal Hinsley has established a Press Bureau in Westminster. Its avowed object is to distribute "authentic" Catholic news to the press whenever important events occur. We do not know anyone better qualified to direct a Catholic News Agency than Cardinal Hinsley. His capacity for lying has been well demonstrated in connexion with the International Congress of the World Union of Freethinkers and he may take it that he has so far justified his appointment as Cardinal. For ourselves, being somewhat critical in such matters, we would not regard Cardinal Hinsley as being a very artistic liar, but he might defend himself by saying that those for whom he lies do not mind very much so long as they hear the lies they are used to hearing.

But the announcement of a press bureau, the object of which is to circulate "Catholic Truth"—as distinguished from that which most people know as truth, is only making public what has been in existence for years. The Roman Catholic officials for many years, by securing places on newspapers, by working on newspapers through influence, by threats of boycott in business, and by editing history, in the manner beloved by Hiliare Belloc, and in text-books for schools, for long had a very powerful press bureau at work. The great lying Church never alters in its nature, it merely adapts the form of its lying to the occasion.

Last week, as evidence of the revival of religion, we referred to the Bishop of Ely, who expressed his belief that the failure of crops cannot be attributed to nature, but to evil spirits that are at work. Now we have to add to the list of real Christians the Vicar of Wetherby. He is reported in the *Wetherby News* of June 10, as saying, that in his judgment even wiping the Communion cup after each person has used it is quite unnecessary. He does not do it himself, because "Christ said 'Drink ye all of this,'" and he cannot conceive that God who can create the miracle of the ceremony cannot manage to gag a number of disease germs. Hats off to the Vicar of Wetherby! He is a real Christian. The breed looks like reviving again, and if the Archbishop really gets his revival we may see the village parson going round casting out devils, and driving demons out of lunatics, even as Jesus Christ did. And did not Jesus say "in my name" his followers should do this thing. And our good Archbishop who was able by a magical ceremony to transform George VI. from a mere man into an incarnation of the deity, will be pleased to exercise his skill in the religious occupation of exorcism.

Canon R. D. Richardson has invented—so the *Church Times* claims—a brand new Communion Service, which is an "affront and scandal." This outrage to "Catholic order and Church discipline" has actually been blessed by Dr. Inge; and Dr. Barnes, who should have stopped it, has not raised a finger in dissent. So Dr. Barnes will now no longer be reported in the Anglo-Catholic organ; he has ceased to be "news" in the popular press, and the *Church Times* is delighted. The only thing to be done now is to beg the Archbishop of Canterbury "to use his authority to bring this Modernist mummery to an end." Why be so insistent on "Modernist" Mummery? Is not the fact that Mr. Richardson insists on his own Communion Service proof that he wishes merely to replace one mummery with another?

Now that the Cinema is ousting the Church in popularity, the various religious bodies are becoming more and more disturbed; and their leaders are at their wit's end to know how to deal with, what is to them, a serious situation. Their idea seems to be that they can compete with the producers of the *Lost Horizon*, or *Zola*, or other

secular masterpieces. One religious paper pours scorn on these "ill-advised" attempts. "The religious film," it declares, "needs men of ability and action to set it on its feet, but all it gets is critics and supporters who have either never set hand to a projector or sat through any extant Church film." The truth is, of course, that the public pays out millions of pounds to be amused or entertained by first-class actors, actresses, and producers; while the childish drivel in the form of religious pictures produced by ignorant and pious producers must make even a Christian public seek refuge in sleep. Gary Cooper, Wallace Beery, Greta Garbo, or Claudette Colbert will attract millions of people, who would not go free to see Christ performing miracles on the Screen, or General Booth giving shirts to poor children before driving away in a Rolls Royce, with special "shots" and "close-ups." The Cinema is here with an ever-growing popularity; the Church is dying before our eyes.

Although the Christian Churches are very far from being united, this may one day become possible because of the advance of Freethought, and the subsequent necessity of forming a single "popular" front against the common enemy. This seems the *raison d'être* for a book of seven hundred pages "of solid matter" entitled *Union of Christendom*, edited by the Bishop of Brechin. But judging from some of the pronouncements of the various authors the time for reunion is not yet. The Roman Catholics for one, will not give up a tittle of their claims, doctrinal or religious; while the Congregationalists, under Dr. Cadoux, "make it plain that their communion at any rate, is not prepared to discuss reunion except on terms frankly unacceptable to the vast majority of Anglicans," as one reviewer of the book puts it. In other words, the Faith that was in Christ seems to be as disrupted as it ever was in the course of its history. And who has the Truth? Nobody in the Churches knows—and nobody will ever know in the Churches. In other words, there is no present prospect that Christian love and Christian brotherhood will lead to any union save that of trying to prevent human freedom growing greater than it is.

Having, according to our chief medicine-man, the Archbishop of Canterbury, a semi-divinity for a king, one must expect his offspring to be a little out of the ordinary. So we are not surprised to learn that at the age of eight Princess Margaret Rose has observed that her sister is prayed for in Church and she is not, and enquired why prayers for her were omitted. We are indebted to *The Leader* for this information, and we see in this remarkable development an indication of the miraculous.

"Lest he forgets" there is a list of members of the Royal Family—in England, whom God is regularly reminded he must look after. But a change of reign, means an alteration in the prayer-book, otherwise the Lord might, in the absence of this directory, pay attention to someone who is dead, or is no longer functioning as King, and it would be very curious to find God blessing Edward VIII., when he is as non-existent as Mrs. Harris. But this change of names with a reprinting of the prayer-book means the loss of stocks of the previous prayer-book. So the Associated Booksellers are trying to find out whether some plan might be adopted by which this trade loss might be avoided. We think that should be managed quite easily. As all our Kings, one after another, have the same virtues, and no vices—unless it is desirable for one to abdicate—what is to prevent leaving out the names altogether, and praying for our wise and gracious and good and dignified and self-sacrificing British monarch and all the members of his family? The insertion of the word "British" would prevent the Lord assuming that non-British monarchs are also wise and good, etc., etc., and are to be looked after.

One phrase (we think it was used by Joseph Chamberlain) that has stuck in our mind since the days of the Boer War was, that we were conducting a "civilized warfare." The Boers did not fully agree with it. But we now have another phrase to bracket with the other one, and the author this time is Joseph Chamberlain's son.

Speaking in the House of Commons on June 14, in reply to the use of bombing planes on the North-West frontier of India, Mr. Chamberlain said he considered the practice to be, "in the main, a humane one." In other words, Mussolini has made much the same claim for bombing in Spain and Africa. He is protecting "civilization." And the Inquisition when it tortured and burned heretics was operating in the interests of religion and morality. Mr. Neville Chamberlain is not nearly so original as some might think.

According to *Reynolds*, the Bishop of Southwell understands better than most of his "cloth" the true qualities essential for becoming "Stewards and Ministers of God's Mysteries." He is quoted as saying:—

When I was rector of Poplar I was called to the bedside of an old costermonger who was very ill. His wife met me at the door and took me inside to see the old man.

She said to me, "The trouble is that 'e 'as lost 'is 'oller. 'Y'see, 'is trade is like yours—it's all 'ollering."

While the Confession is valid enough against the clergy we must protest against the Bishop's attempt to compare his delinquent profession with the infinitely more "respectable" trade of costermongery. The latter job may be accompanied by some sort of rough oratory, but we must remember that while the clergy "holler" as much as the coster, the latter—if he would succeed—has also to trade honestly and to offer genuine goods for sale. Also the coster is liable to prosecution and imprisonment for cheating, misrepresenting, and obtaining money under false pretences.

The *News-Chronicle* will have to be severely "strafed" by its "religious editor." It is actually poking fun at that most humorless creature Dr. Frank Buchman, whose precious "Oxford Group" is patronized with appropriate seriousness by Mr. Hugh Redwood—in another section of the same daily newspaper. But this is how the news-editor refers to "Frank":—

Dr. Frank Buchman comes of Lutheran Dutch Pennsylvanian family of distillers. Round-faced; spectacled; looks and talks like successful salesman.

Come to save soul of England in 1921 through drawing-room meetings and house-parties. Likes to be called "Frank." Spends hour in bed every morning receiving what he calls "the orders of the day" from the Almighty. Takes his religion in first-class comfort.

We like the biting sarcasm of that "First-class," so characteristic of the "de luxe travel" of Buchman, and most of the leading "followers" of "Him who had not where to lay His head."

The Bishop of Exeter writes in the *Exeter Diocesan Leaflet*, that he is "convinced there is no more creative way in which a man may spend his money than by building a church." Two things in this opinion interest us. First, there is the obviously unselfish nature of the opinion. A racecourse tipster who told a Derby crowd that no one could spend his money better than by buying his tips, or a quack medicine vendor who assures the world that no one could better spend his money than by buying his concoction, might be suspected in having a personal interest in giving the advice. A parson is above all such suspicion. Second, we like the word "creative" applied to spending money. A Church certainly illustrates this. It creates a place in which people may be taught to put up with the troubles of this world because there is another awaiting them where they will be repaid. It creates work for those who build it, although the time and money spent in building and improving houses might do as much good. It creates an opportunity for guarding the minds of the growing generation against the power of "dangerous opinions." And lastly, a matter on which the Bishop was not thinking, it provides a number of comfortable jobs for those who would be hard put to it to get anything like the same living in the open labour market. We feel inclined to thank the Bishop of Exeter for that most excellent phrase.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- C. A. MORRISON.—We have read your letter with great interest, and are preserving it with the intention of dealing with it in detail. You will see we have already dealt with the hypocritical pronouncement of Sir Samuel Hoare. Your letter to the *Telegraph* was opportune, but one must not expect the London papers to act with honesty towards real Freethought. They have never done so at any time. We hope you will make yourself known to us whenever opportunity offers.
- G. WALLACE.—Received. Will appear as soon as possible. Sorry to hear of your accident. We are well, but quite ready for a rest, and intend taking a few days off soon.
- W. FREEMAN.—We doubt very much if the editor would permit a real reply to the religious article. They seldom do, but a brief letter dealing with one or two special points might achieve publicity.
- B. A. MILLICAMP.—Pleased to hear from yet another fifty-year-old reader of this paper. We do not expect any great change yet in the B.B.C. "The evil that men do lives after them," might be a fitting epitaph for Sir John Reith, and the atmosphere of religious dishonesty, trickery, and autocracy set up by him will not easily die out.
- C. DORAN.—Your communication was rather long for a letter, and we have no doubt that if it had been on the religious side it would have been abridged for publication. It was to the point.
- C. F. GRUNDY.—We were a bit tired after the Conference, and have been very busy ever since. However will try and get brief holiday so soon as it can be managed.
- C. LANCASTER.—Much obliged for paper. Readers help us greatly who send on items of news they think may be of use.
- B. LEMONDE.—It is not of first-rate importance to note what scientists say, since so much of it is coloured by prepossessions and the desire not to shock religious feelings. Pay attention to what scientists *do*, how they act, and also try to grasp what science really teaches. If you do that you will discover that every scientist is in his work a strict determinist, and, further, that it is impossible to think of natural operations save in terms of the strictest determinism. All the talk about the breakdown of determinism is so much verbiage. Even Eddington admits that he cannot think of the world save in terms of determinism. You will find this subject dealt with in several of Mr. Cohen's books.
- F. E. JONES (Buenos Aires).—Thanks for good wishes. We are getting along comfortably, and while there is so much to do, not to do it is more worrying than doing it.
- DOX FISHER.—We wish all our correspondents were as open-minded as you are. Many people seem to be far more anxious to prove they are right than to discover whether they may not be in error. And the wisest of us make mistakes.
- A.W.S.—Shall be pleased to see you when you come to London. Will use part of your communication.
- A. H. STONE, J. TROWER, AND F. C. HOLDEN.—Much obliged for cuttings.
- J. TROWER.—Thanks for addresses of likely new readers; paper being sent for four weeks.
- 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.*
- All Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to "The Pioneer Press," and crossed "Midland Bank, Ltd., Clerkenwell Branch."*
- 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.
The offices of the National Secular Society and the Secular Society Limited, are now at 68 Farringdon Street, London E.C.4. Telephone: Central 1367.
Lecture notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4 by the first post on Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

Sugar Plums

Mr. Cohen takes this opportunity of thanking those who have written congratulating him on the success of the N.S.S. Conference, and complimenting him on his work and influence on the Freethought movement in this country. If there is any truth in what one writer says, and which is echoed by others, that he has set his mark in the history of Freethought, he will feel repaid for anything, and everything he has done. But it is not correct to say with one correspondent that he "gave up everything for Freethought." He did nothing of the kind. He has always worked for Freethought because he enjoyed doing that more than anything else. He has followed his bent, and one could not do better than that.

We have had many letters thanking us for last week's "Views and Opinions," dealing with Sir Samuel Hoare and the International Congress. Copies of the *Freethinker* have been sent round to a large number of newspapers—few of which we imagine will have the honesty to mention it, and a great many members of Parliament, who will certainly be none the worse for reading it. We invite the help of our readers further to circulate last week's issue.

We begin, this week, the publication of a series of articles by Mr. Jack Lindsay dealing with Christian origins. The articles now appearing are, later, to form part of a book. Mr. Lindsay has a high opinion of the opinions of most Freethinkers, and would be pleased to hear any critical observations they have to make. We shall be pleased to insert a limited number of such critical letters, but they must be brief. Our space is limited, and letters should not be more than 250 to 300 words. Writers must not mistake an essay for a letter.

Commenting on the ignorant bigotry displayed by the carefully worked up agitation (now falling a little flat) against the International Congress, the *Stockport Press* for June 9 says:—

Strange that such an intolerant attitude should be taken up at this time of day against a body of men whose only aim is to discover the truth and to spread it.

In the United States a Freethinker is a man to be admired. He is looked upon with pride in that liberty-loving country. A man cannot be a Freethinker without serious thought, without trying out his reasoning powers against all the forces of orthodoxy and superstition.

Well, well! I am ready to state that "the great mass of Christian people" hold beliefs that are repugnant to learned men of all countries, men who have spent a lifetime in digging and delving into the past and the present in the hope of striking a nugget of truth in the interest of world progress.

The Congress comes at a moment when we are being asked to preserve liberty of conscience and freedom both of speech and action.

The torrent of lies that have been told concerning the Congress and the exhibition of Christian intolerance, together with that of almost unbelievable ignorance and bigotry displayed by a group of members of Parliament, also comes at a moment when Freethinkers, particularly the weaker and more timid and more "respectable" ones need reminding that real Christianity is still with us, as virulent and as intolerant as ever. As we have so often said, a large part of the strength of the bigots is derived

from the indolence and timidity of large numbers of unbelievers. Offering a tiger cream buns is a foolish way of destroying its taste for human babies.

We had an interview with the Rev. H. Allen Job, about whom we wrote, and over a friendly drink (tea and coffee), quite enjoyed our chat. We found Mr. Job a well-read and companionable man, broad in his views, and tolerant in his disposition. We were not in the least surprised at this. A clergyman who wishes to talk over religion with a well-known Freethinker is not of the common type; we know too many clergymen who make the mistake of believing that all are either rogues or fools. Like Ingersoll, we do not dislike the man because he has got religion, we dislike religion because it has got the man. We have said very, very often that one of our principal complaints against the Christian Church is, not that it numbers blackguards and fools, but that it does get hold of many good men and women and uses them for the perpetuation of thoroughly bad teaching. If only rogues and fools became Christians the Church might be regarded as a kind of safety valve for society. We shall hope to meet Mr. Job again some day.

Bath is one of the backward areas as far as Freethought is concerned, and the local saints should take full advantage of Mr. Whitehead's visit. He will address meetings at Kingsmead Square on Saturday evening, June 25, at 7.30, and each evening until July 1. Full advantage should also be taken for acquiring publications of the Pioneer Press, which will be on sale at all the meetings, and in this connexion the *Pamphlets for the People* passed on to friends constitutes an excellent form of propaganda.

Recognition is due to the Rev. Ralph Gardner, of South Benfleet, who writes in the *Times* for June 2:—

It is claimed by Captain Ramsay and others that General Franco is the champion of Christianity against a foe whose hostility to religion has been demonstrated in various ways. There are those who maintain that the Church in Spain has proved itself in the past the ally of the most reactionary and oppressive political forces. This is, perhaps, an arguable point. But assuming, as we must, that General Franco is ultimately responsible for the orders which led to the recent bombings of Barcelona, Alicante and other towns in Government hands, the obvious question to ask is: How far does the Church, which accepts him as its champion, acquiesce in these abominable acts? If it does approve of them, we can at least understand why the Government treats "religion" with scant consideration and respect. If it does not approve, why does not the Church make it perfectly clear that its continued support of the insurgent cause is conditional on the cessation of all attempts to terrorize the civil population from the air? No Christian, of course, can defend atrocity in any cause. But it must be remembered that in this instance one of the parties claims the guidance and authority of the Holy Spirit, whereas the other claims no supernatural sanctions. To many Christians the wanton destruction of human life from the air is an act at least as atrocious as the destruction of churches and the murder of priests.

Although the influence of Roman Catholics on Trades Unions is well known, the "Council for the Investigation of Vatican Influence and Censorship" has done well in collecting information as to the work of the Roman Church in this direction. The pamphlet is published at a penny, and can be obtained from Room 25, 55 Chancery Lane, E.C. One thing we miss from this pamphlet is the manner in which the Roman Church wished to put an end to the Trades Union Congress voting, as it did on many occasions, in favour of the abolition of religious teaching in schools. Had the Trades Union Congress kept this question to the front, it would materially have helped to put an end to using the schools in favour of either Protestantism or Roman Catholicism. One must always bear in mind that whenever Roman Catholic and Protestant Religious interests are at one, they will fight side by side against genuine Freethought.

The Apostle of Sweetness and Light

BOTH in Britain and abroad the nineteenth century was prolific in personalities of eminent ability in many departments of culture. The period adorned in England by the poets Tennyson, Browning, Meredith, Swinburne and Arnold; the scientific philosophy of Spencer, Bain, Mill and Lewes; the art of Watts, Rossetti and Millais; the science of Faraday, Darwin, Lyell, Tyndall and Huxley, was indeed great. There were then outstanding statesmen and prophets, and declaimers such as Ruskin and Carlyle. In history important work is still performed, but the earlier period produced its Macaulay, Lecky, Buckle, Froude and Maitland. The field of fiction was then crowded with great creators such as Thackeray, Dickens, George Eliot, the Brontës, Meredith, and Hardy, whose successors one seems sadly to seek; while in another field, our revered veteran anthropologist, Sir James Frazer, has passed his eightieth year.

If little read now, Matthew Arnold made a profound impression in literary and religious circles in his day. A son of Dr. Arnold, a reformer of our public schools, especially at Rugby, Matthew was born near Staines in 1822. At Oxford he was fascinated by Newman, although the tractarians were his father's aversion. Newman's powerful personality, apart from his teachings, exercised a permanent influence over Arnold, who, late in life, ranked the famous convert to Rome with Goethe, Wordsworth and Sainte-Beuve as one the four exemplars from whom he derived "habits, methods, ruling ideas which are constantly with me."

In company with his friend, the poet Clough, and many other distinguished men, Arnold early mistrusted the truth of the Thirty-Nine Articles. Yet, with all his subsequent scholarly scepticism he retained throughout life a broadly religious outlook. Although a decided Freethinker in the higher philosophical sense, he was never completely emancipated. Religion remained to him as morality touched by emotion.

John Morley once described Gladstone as a solitary man, and this was equally true of Arnold. Yet few men were more appreciative of social intercourse. Prof. Reuth opines that "Arnold, like Shelley, often laments the essential loneliness of every human being—and then, in the end he finds that to be his best self he must be in touch with his fellow-men. Some of man's finest faculties are social, or at least only blossom and flower among human sympathies."

There were two aspects of Arnold's character. No one more appreciated the pleasures of study and reflection, yet the poet and critic was also a man of action. During his lengthy service as a school inspector he was most conscientious in the performance of his duties. Despite his spiritual leanings his secular interests were pronounced. Wordsworth's influence was superseded by that of the more practical Goethe and, perhaps unconsciously, Arnold's ideals became what Spencer defined as "acts adjusted to ends." All the factors that condition conduct should be sublimed by art in all its varied forms and, above all, in the lettered page.

The Strayed Reveller volume appeared in 1849, but its reception was so discouraging that it was withdrawn. In 1852 *Empedocles on Etna and other Poems* was published, but when, in the following year, Arnold republished his previous poetry, *Empedocles* was missing. The author seemed dissatisfied with this fine work, which contains some of his most expressive utterances. Browning regretted its omis-

sion, and this led to its later restoration. Arnold's Freethought is more clearly displayed in this dramatic masterpiece than perhaps in any other poem. Man is depicted as the sport of the blind forces of Nature:—

Streams will not curb their pride
The just man not to entomb,
Nor lightnings go aside
To leave his virtues room;
Nor is the wind less rough that blows a good man's barge.

Nature, with equal mind,
Sees all her sons at play,
Sees man control the wind,
The wind sweep man away;
Allows the proudly-riding and the foundered bark.

Fools! that in man's brief term
He cannot all things view,
Affords no ground to affirm
That there are Gods who do!
Nor does being weary prove that he has where to rest.

Save in the immortal sonnet to Shakespeare, Arnold's poetry, finely chiselled as it is, lacks fire. It contains penetrating criticism, that in the *Memorial Verses* above all:—

Time may restore us in his course
Goethe's sage mind and Byron's force;
But where will Europe's latter hour
Again find Wordsworth's healing power?
Others will teach us how to dare,
And against fear our breasts to steel;
Others will strengthen us to bear—
But who, ah! who, will make us feel?

When Arnold's poetry is estimated as a whole it must, however, be conceded that A. C. Benson's contention that it is scarcely hopeful nor impressive is largely true. To this critic the poems "are stern, reflective, sorrowful, regarding the world as a place full of beauty, which it is impossible to enjoy light-heartedly, and as a sense of duty which it is unmanly to avoid. . . . They are the work of a poet whose emotion is held serenely in check by a scholarly and philosophical instinct."

Arnold's educational ideal was almost exclusively literary and completely neglects the needs of technical and scientific training. Poetry he defines as a criticism of life and true culture enables us to see life steadily and see it whole. Yet he was scarcely conscious of the practical requirements of an industrial age. Nor did he appreciate or even understand his greater contemporaries in England, and he sought, and he thought he found abroad or in classic Greece, ethical and intellectual excellence which was staring him in the face at home. This myopia and prejudice was scathingly exposed by Herbert Spencer in his *Study of Sociology*, while Arnold's suggested British Academy was pitilessly derided by the evolutionary philosopher.

Arnold was a man of stainless character, and his letters reveal a charming and urbane personality. Melancholy pervades his poetry, but his prose, on the other hand, possesses buoyancy, a marked sense of self-confidence, a graceful condescension, and is not devoid of mockery, sarcasm and irony, especially when answering his assailants. His public attitude sometimes made him appear supercilious and sardonic. He made light of the brave and honourable conduct of Bishop Colenso, nor could any other religious reformer gain support from the aloof critic. So genial a man of letters as Dr. Richard Garnett was constrained to complain that in Arnold's celebrated preface to his *Poems*, he maliciously selected the salient intellectual shortcomings of his compatriots for admonition and denunciation. Indeed, his exotic fervour was at its height. "Soon discovering himself to be at issue with his

countrymen in every region of opinion," writes Dr. Garnett, "Arnold subsequently undertook the unpopular office of detector general of the intellectual failings of his own nation. The cast of his mind was rather critical than constructive, and the gradual drying up of his native spring of poetry, at no time copious, left him no choice between criticism and silence. . . . Nor was it possible to lecture his countrymen as he did without assuming the air of the deservedly detested 'superior person.'"

The late Walter Raleigh, in his interesting introduction to Arnold's *Essays in Criticism*, notes that not one of the authors reviewed is an Englishman or Scot. He also suggests that the critical spirit of the poet overpowered his muse at an early stage of his career. Certainly, in Arnold's later poetry, despite its serenity and chiselled beauty, there is little imagination, a quality which Swinburne regarded as indispensable to great poetry. Still what metrical composition lost, prose perhaps gained. According to Arnold our upper class—the Barbarians—was materialized; the Philistine Middle Class was vulgarized and the mass of the people were brutalized. The famous preface assailed the Philistines, in mocking, sarcastic, and contemptuous terms. While Arnold's contemporaries plumed themselves on their logic he himself seemed to cherish a quality akin to Newman's illative sense. He assures us that he was ever at variance with the logicians. "They imagine truth as something to be proved," he says, "I something to be seen; they something to be manufactured, I as something to be found. I have a very profound respect for intuitions, and a very lukewarm respect for the elaborate machine-work of my friends the logicians."

The *Examiner*, the *Guardian*, the *Saturday Review*, and the "young lions of the *Daily Telegraph*," are all bantered and rebuked. But the preface also contains the celebrated passage on Arnold's fostering mother, the superb city of spires. After urging that the last secrets of philosophy were still undiscovered, and that his personal demerits must not sully Oxford merely because he had been appointed Professor in the University, he eloquently proceeds: "Beautiful city! so venerable, so lovely, so unravaged by the fierce intellectual life of our century, so serene!

'There are our young barbarians, all at play.'

And yet, steeped in sentiment as she lies, spreading her gardens to the moonlight, and whispering from her towers the last enchantments of the Middle Age, who will deny that Oxford, by her ineffable charm, keeps ever calling us near to the true goal of all of us, to the ideal, to perfection—to beauty, in a word, which is only truth seen from another side? . . . Adorable dreamer, whose heart has been so romantic! . . . home of lost causes, and forsaken beliefs, and unpopular names, and impossible loyalties."

That Arnold was a genuine humanitarian needs no saying, if his message was sometimes marred by perversity and inconsequence. Nevertheless, his various contributions to theological and higher critical themes served to broaden and deepen the outlook of the orthodox public. Unfortunately he failed to realize the vast intellectual revolution which modern science and industrial development were destined to accomplish, while, when viewed as a religious reformer, he was far inferior in almost every respect to Titans such as Spinoza, Erasmus or Voltaire.

T. F. PALMER.

Of all the intellectual weapons which have ever been wielded by man, the most terrible was the mocking of Voltaire.—*Macaulay*.

The Way of the World

THE Duke of Devonshire died in a state of comparative poverty. His estate was returned, for taxation purposes, at £112,000. But one's feelings of sympathy for this state of genteel poverty are diminished by the news that the Duke had taken the precaution of turning his estate into a private company, of which all but two or three shares were held by his family. Otherwise the Exchequer would have levied death duties amounting to well over a million. A business man, to avoid taxes, has to risk a charge of fraud. No member of our old nobility would stoop to that. He would be a fool if he did when the law provides such an obvious way of protecting these titled patriots from a taxation to which other men are exposed. One remembers also the large sums owing to the Exchequer for income-tax, debts ranging over years, by Lord Birkenhead. One can well believe that England without its titled aristocracy would not be what it is.

Mr. Chamberlain has explained that he cannot protect British ships from being bombed by Italian and German aeroplanes, because that would involve our firing upon these said planes, which would be a clear act of intervention. At the same time, with insistent and consistent firmness he is making it known to General Franco that he is still annoyed at so many British ships being sunk, and so many British lives lost. Someone has suggested that as we cannot protect our own ships being bombed, why not hand over the British mercantile fleet to Hitler? He would probably find some ways of protecting it. Or alternatively, why does not Sir John Simon arrange for some of our large cruising vessels to take parties to witness the bombing of British ships in a time of "peace." We are quite sure that many would pay a good sum for so unusual a sight, and the money could then be devoted by the Government to our armament scheme for protecting British lives and British property.

Mr. Chamberlain has informed the House of Commons, and the world, that our bombing is not that of other people's bombing. When our aeroplanes are about to bomb native villages in India a full twenty-four hours' notice is given to the inhabitants, so that they can get out of the way by hiding in caves or travelling a distance away. After that, it is, of course, the people's own fault if anyone is hurt. The bombing is not intended to hurt anyone, and the huts are of such small value that their loss cannot matter. We, of course, accept the explanation, which is precisely what we should have expected. But there is one danger that the Prime Minister has overlooked. As no one is injured, and as Sir John Simon said some time ago the method of bombing is economical, may it not be that bombing operations will become to the natives on the North-West frontier, a kind of firework entertainment, which the natives may invite in order to secure an evening's entertainment? Most of us love firework displays.

We have some idea that the "gallant Christian gentleman" Franco also, on several occasions, gave notice that if the inhabitants of certain towns surrendered to him no bombing would take place. After that it is, of course, entirely the fault of the inhabitants if any of them get hurt. And Mussolini, the man in whose word Mr. Chamberlain has such touching faith, also told the Abyssinians that if they laid down their arms no bombing would take place. But if people will not obey what is one to do?

Lords Redesdale, Londonderry, and other British admirers of Hitler and Co., will learn with rejoicing that Ernst Wiechart, one of the few remaining novelists of note in Germany, has been imprisoned for withdrawing his "charitable" subscriptions from the Nazi Welfare Organization, and sending the money instead to the wife of Pastor Niemoeller, who is imprisoned because he will not substitute Hitler for God Almighty. The readiness with which the German people support Nazism is remarkable, and unique in the quality of its spontaneity.

The latest law that is to be proclaimed against Jews in Germany applies to babies. Babies born of Jewish parents are automatically outlawed. The police will have the right to expel them immediately, as foreigners without papers. But this seems very extravagant. Germany, we understood, has a shortage of meat; why not adopt Dean Swift's celebrated suggestion with regard to Irish babies, and boil them? It seems a sinful thing to throw away so much food. We are not in touch with Hitler, but Lord Redesdale might pass on the suggestion. Hitler would suspect a plot if we wrote him.

But we are sure that our English Fascists will have noted with keen approval the beating up of old men, women, and children; it is not polite to mention other ways in which the gallant Storm Troopers amuse themselves when they break into houses. The robbery of Jewish traders under guise of buying their businesses, is a policy of either confiscation or a forced sale at whatever the Jew-baiter cares to give is centuries old. There is nothing new in the behaviour of those men who are so much admired by Lords Redesdale and Londonderry. And beating people who cannot strike back is a game at which Hitler and his followers have always excelled.

The daily press for June 20 drew special attention to the picture of Princess Margaret Rose at a parade of little girl guides. Readers were asked to note that when the Princess wished to stand on one leg, she lifted the other from the ground, and that when she was, what in ordinary mortals would be called fidgetting, she turned one of her feet sideways. And the *Daily Express* calls attention, on the front page, to the fact that when the Princess got tired of standing, she leaned against the wall. It is things like these that bind the throne to the hearts of the public, and indicate a people who can well be trusted to settle urgent world-problems.

QUONDAM.

Bible Apologetics

[Just now, when the *Bible* is so much in the air, our readers may be interested in the following from the pen of G. W. Foote, concerning the once famous controversy between Col. Ingersoll and W. E. Gladstone.]

GLADSTONE'S article is very wordy. Long sentences and crowds of adjectives make it somewhat tiresome. It is evident that the writer has not mastered his opponent's arguments. Sometimes, indeed, he gets into a frightful muddle—mentally suffocated with his own verbosity, like a spider enmeshed in its own web.

The tone is generally fair and courteous, but sometimes Ingersoll is lectured a little superciliously. Gladstone "recommends" him to read Butler, as though the great American Freethinker were ignorant of such a well-known and accessible book. Gladstone appears to think no one has read Butler but himself.

While admitting that "Colonel Ingersoll" writes with a rare and enviable brilliancy," Gladstone takes him to

task for his want of calmness and sobriety." This is simply saying that Ingersoll is witty. Gladstone declares that Jehovah, being "encircled in the heart of every believer with the profoundest reverence and love," should only be approached with "deep and reverential calm." What does this mean? Does it not mean that Ingersoll should share Gladstone's feelings towards Gladstone's idol? Were the worshippers of Mumbo Jumbo to make such a demand on Gladstone he would laugh them to scorn. Nay, the Bible itself is full of the wildest denunciation of "false gods." Read Isaiah, read Elijah's mockery of the priests of Baal. Surely Ingersoll has as much right to denounce Jehovah as Christians have to denounce the gods of the heathen whom they send missionaries to convert.

Gladstone pretends that Jehovah should be treated "with those decent reserves which are deemed essential when a human being, say a parent, wife or sister, is in question." He forgets that Jehovah is a public character. Why otherwise should Gladstone write about him in a review? Should Gladstone's wife, sister, son, or daughter become a public character, it would be idle for him to ask that they should be treated with those "decent reserves" to which they are entitled while they remain in private obscurity. Still more idle would it be if their characters were held up for "reverence" by thousands of State-paid clergy. What we are asked to admire we are free to criticize. Deny this and you are guilty of tyranny or imposture.

It is amusing to see Christians advising Freethinkers how they should attack Christianity. Do they want Freethinkers to succeed? If they do, they must be strange people; if they do not, their advice is hypocritical. Fancy one army telling another how the battle should be conducted! Would any man in his senses adopt the tactics recommended by his enemy? Would a general adopt a plan of battle drawn up by the general on the other side?

From *The Freethinker*, June 24, 1888.

Amos the Amorphous

Amos the Incomprehensible; the despair of commentators—who swore he was no prophet, but "carried on" with the same challenge to sense and reason that all the "real" prophets did. Amos, whose very words are as amorphous as the ravings of any lunatic, and who—for all his innocent repudiation of professional prophetism—prefaced his nonsense with "The Lord said unto me," "Thus saith the Lord," and "Thus hath the Lord God showed unto me."

Amos's book contains more than its fair share of utterly meaningless passages. One would not quote Amos iv. to illustrate *The Bible as Literature* :—

Ye shall go out at the breaches, every cow at that which is before her, and ye shall cast them into the palace, saith the Lord. (iv. 3.)

Frequent eulogies of the Prophet Amos appear in recent religious writings, making one wonder that in earlier times Amos was so badly ignored. "Both the man and his message," says the Rev. W. B. Selbie, "are a revelation, a challenge, a bolt from the blue." Dr. Selbie expressly asserts that Amos did not see and judge "by the common standards of his time, but in the light of certain new and higher values which God revealed to him" (modern Socialism in effect). "The Christian attitude," Dr. Selbie deduces, "must be not that of a reformer, but of a revolutionary."

The late Canon Percy Dearmer was frequently calling Amos a social reformer of the true Socialist type. The Rev. Conrad Noel (in *Christianity and the Social Revolution*) couples Amos with Isaiah as "denouncing the ruling classes." Professor John Lewis (in the same volume) mentions Amos in a reference to the "four great prophets who criticized priestly religion and social injustice."

Dr. Cheyne (in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*) calls Amos "a surprising phenomenon." But all scholars agree that there are many "interpolations" in the book, that

it has been "edited" again and again, and that in any case nobody knows which parts if any were written by Amos or in the alleged days of the alleged Amos.

Mr. J. M. Robertson, in *A Short History of Free-thought*, says: "We are forced to regard with distrust all passages . . . which express a disregard of sacrifice and ritual . . . incongruous with all we know of the native culture of the period."

Perhaps it was William Blake, or it may have been a *Freethinker* comic Bible cartoon, which represented pictorially Amos's bold conception of Jehovah standing on a wall holding a plumb-line in his hand (Amos vii. 7). This is only one of Amos's many peculiar fancies. He loved picturing God in unlikely poses. Once he "saw the Lord standing upon the Altar" (ix. 1), and later Jehovah is described as complaining, "I am pressed under you like a cart full of sheaves."

Quaint incidents are recorded by this prophet. "The shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs or a piece of an ear" (iii. 12). "A man leaned his hand on a wall and a serpent bit him" (v. 9). And Amos asks such conundrums as "Will a lion roar in the forest when he hath no prey?" "Can a bird fall in a snare where no gin is?" "Shall a trumpet be blown and the people be not afraid?" and the famous query: "Shall there be evil in a city and the Lord hath not done it?" (Amos iii. 6).

It was Amos who made Jehovah directly responsible for human bald-headedness (Amos viii. 10) and predicted that men should one day be struck with a peculiar type of deafness "not a famine of bread nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord" (Amos viii. 11). Let us admit that such deafness has really happened. If God still "roars" as Amos says he used to do (Amos i. 3), man has long ago given up listening—perhaps in the spirit of Thomas E. Brown's fine protest against

" . . . a silly something in the air—

Call you this SPEECH?

O God, if it be speech,

Speak plainer

If Thou wouldst teach

That I shall be a gainer."

Modern eulogies of Amos are based on the claim that Amos was indignant against the idle rich and in favour of the suffering poor. Amos—meaning always the book so named—always sententious, gave also the trite advice: "Hate the evil and love the good." Like the late President Coolidge's pastor, he was "against" wrongdoing.

It cannot be denied that in this book are included denunciations of some slave-dealers, landowners, corrupt and immoral people. This is mixed up irrecoverably with the author's (or authors') objection to infidelity.

Amos opposes Israel's following of gods other than Jehovah (Amos viii. 26), and naturally therefore imagines that only these infidels could be rich and guilty of every possible crime. The prophet's own poverty would make his severities crisp in criticizing rich people, an obvious reason for regarding wealth as synonymous with wickedness.

In this connexion, Amos distinctly promises (or threatens) that Jehovah "will smite the great house and the LITTLE house" in his day of vengeance (Amos vi. 11).

The real crime for Amos and Jehovah lay in "not mentioning the name of the Lord" (vi. 11). As Moses told us, Jehovah was "a jealous God." And Amos "predicted" the Great Exile as God's method of punishing His faithless Israel. It is quite possible to imagine the punishment of infidelity applied exclusively to infidels. It is quite inconsistent with the intervention of a God—if acting on behalf of the poor—to carry out the abominations detailed by Amos, EQUALLY (and in practice MOSTLY) to be endured by the poor as by the idlest and vilest of the rich. The exile of a nation, like an aerial bomb, falls alike on the evil and the good.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

The social question requires to-day, more than ever, to be examined on the side of human dignity.

Victor Hugo.

A Pacifist Play

IRWIN SHAW is a young American Pacifist, who, up till a few years ago, had never tried his hand at writing for a living. When his first effort was produced in New York, in 1935, it met with such enormous success that young Mr. Shaw tried his hand at other subjects, but none of his subsequent efforts met with quarter the success which his first play "Bury the Dead" received. This play was recently produced at the little Unity Theatre in St. Pancras, and is at the moment of writing being performed there nightly. It had already had a trial run at the People's Palace in the Mile End Road, but upon this occasion the Censor forbade the play to be given in its entirety, and much of the action was consequently missing—along with such harmless words as "whore" and "stink." The Censor also ordered references to Jesus Christ to be deleted. Having heard of the "cuts," we chose to wait and see the piece performed in its entirety, when it was produced by Mr. Andre Van Gyseghem at the Unity, and although there seems small chance that the greater London public will ever get a chance of witnessing on the stage so vivid a protest against war, it should be possible to join the Unity Club before the run of "Bury the Dead" finishes at the end of this month.

When the play opens, a burial party are shovelling earth into a grave, somewhere behind the front line of trenches during the Great War. Suddenly they are horrified to hear a groan, and this is followed by the stirring earth as slowly and painfully six of the dead men rise and stand in their graves. The Captain reports it to the Generals, who in their turn do the best they can to hush it up—it would be bad for the morale of the Army, if it got about that some men actually refused to be buried! The newspapers are censored and the Church does its bit in trying to persuade the men to lie down. All attempts seem to prove of little avail, and so the Generals themselves take the courageous step of going to the front line, and at first beg and finally command the corpses to lie down. As the dead still refuse, word is broadcast to wives and mothers and sweethearts, who are begged by both politicians and the clergy to go out to the battle-field and induce their men to lie down. It is here that the play's message is pointed with a vengeance, for in six moving scenes we hear the men explaining why they wanted to go on with their lives which ended so cruelly and so unjustly. The act of dying has taught them that they died for the wrong things, and in spite of tears and entreaties, in spite of the hysteria and bullying of the Church, they move implacably out of their graves, untouched by the machine-gun bullets which the Generals as a last desperate measure fire themselves and they return with determined footsteps to the living with their message. This last scene in which the actors walk into the audience, finally disappearing at the back of the auditorium whilst the curtain falls on an empty stage is a most effective piece of production, and one which is a fit ending to a most unusual play—a play which should be seen by a wider public; more so at this particular moment perhaps than at others because never was mad nationalism stronger in the world than it is to-day, and as Tom Driscoll says, "A man can only die happy and be contentedly buried when he dies for himself, or for a cause which is his own."

The play was on the whole well acted by a semi-amateur cast, who have been lucky to have the advantage of Mr. Van Gyseghem's production. If I do not mention the players individually one by one, it is not because I am churlish enough to think the cast unworthy of the play. It is because it is a communal effort and no names are mentioned on the programme. At any rate, in this particular case "The play's the thing," and so long as the sentiments are uttered intelligibly, the Author's purpose gets over and makes for an exciting and inspiring evening's entertainment.

PETER NORTHCOTE.

Religion endows excerpts from the laws of primitive peoples with an eternal significance.—J. B. S. Haldane.

Correspondence

"CHRISTIAN SOCIALISM."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—The article by Ignotus on "Christian Socialism" (*Freethinker*, June 5), was not unreminiscent of one of those Evangelical tracts on "Hell," which I feel sure he would be the first to deride. For it expresses views with the same ingenuousness, the same immoderation, and the same inability to distinguish the intermediate shades betwixt Black and White. It would have been fairer too, had Ignotus explained that, "the nationalization, and finally, the internationalization of all property, including the means of production, distribution, and exchange . . ." means a more equitable distribution of the World's wealth amongst those vast masses who, at the moment, find themselves disinherited.

If first things should come first, Socialists are quite right in fighting their battle for social justice hand-in-hand with those who call themselves "Christian Socialists." The abolition of poverty is the prime necessity of our civilization to-day, and when we line up eventually for the ultimate struggle against the forces of reaction, whether of the Church or State, I have no doubt that "Christian Socialists" will render valuable aid. Men such as the Dean of Canterbury and the Rev. Conrad Noel do not "cajole or bribe." They have interpreted the teachings of Christ as a live force for social betterment. That other interpretations are possible may give pause to those who question the divinity of Christ, but does not reflect upon the sincerity of those who call themselves "Christian Socialists." The unfair imputations contained in the article faithfully image the fanatic mind which insists that all things which are not White are necessarily Black.

ROY BOULTING.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON

INDOOR

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1) : 11.0, Professor T. H. Pear, M.A., B.Sc.—"Social Satisfaction and Behaviour."

OUTDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand) : 6.30, Mr. L. Ebury.

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place) : 7.30, Mr. Barker.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Highbury Corner) 8.0, Friday, Mr. L. Ebury. White Stone Pond, Hampstead, 11.30, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury. Parliament Hill Fields, 3.30, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury. South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Monday, Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park) : 7.0, Sunday, Mr. A. Flanders. Rushcroft Road, near Brixton Town Hall, 8.0, Tuesday, Mr. J. Barker. Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town, 8.0, Friday, Mr. J. Barker.

WEST HAM BRANCH (Corner of Deanery Road, Water Lane, Stratford, E.) : 7.0, Mr. G. P. Green.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park) : 3.30, Sunday, Miss E. Millard, M.A., Messrs. E. Bryant and G. Barnes. 6.30, Messrs. Bryant, Barnes and Tuson. Wednesday, 7.30, Mr. W. B. Collins. Thursday, 7.30, Mr. E. C. Saphin and Mrs. N. Buxton. Friday, 7.30, Mr. G. Barnes.

COUNTRY

OUTDOOR

BATH (Kingsmead Square) : 7.30, Mr. G. Whitehead will speak each evening from Saturday, June 25 until Friday, July 1.

BLYTH (Fountain) : 7.0, Monday, Mr. J. T. Brighton. CHESTER-LE-STREET (The Bridge) : 8.0, Friday, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"Good God!"

CHORLEY (Market) : 8.0, Tuesday, Mr. J. V. Shortt. ECCLES (Market) : 8.0, Friday, Mr. J. V. Shortt.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (The Mound) : 7.0, Mr. F. Smithies—"Science and Conscience."

(Continued on page 415)

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(Continued from page 414)

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Albert Road) : 8.0, Tuesday, M. Whitefield. Peel Street, 8.30, A. Copland. Minard Road, 8.0, Thursday, M. Whitefield. Albion Street, 8.0, Friday, M. Whitefield and A. Copland. Albion Street, 8.0, Sunday, M. Whitefield and A. Copland. Literature on sale at all meetings.

GREENOCK BRANCH N.S.S. (Grey Place) : 8.0, Wednesday, Muriel Whitefield and C. Mair.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Corner of High Park Street) : 8.0, Thursday, Mr. Parry and Mrs. Thompson. Queens Drive opposite Walton Street Baths, 8.0, Sunday, Messrs. Ashby and Parry.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Eccles Market) : 8.0, Friday, Alexander Park Gates, 8.0, Saturday, Stevenson Square, 7.30, Sunday. Wigan Market Place, 8.0, Monday. Mr. W. A. Atkinson will speak at each of these meetings.

NORTH ORMESBY (Market) : 7.0, Wednesday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

NORTH SHIELDS (Harbour View) : 7.0, Tuesday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

STOCKTON (Market Cross) : 7.0, Sunday, Mr. J. T. Brighton

— "The Bishops and the Bible."

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Gill Bridge Avenue) : 7.0, Mr. H. Dalkin— "The Price of Liberty."

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