

# THE FREETHINKER

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## Views and Opinions

### Bigotry in Parliament

NEARLY forty years ago I wrote a couple of articles for this paper on "The Tyranny of Speech." For fear of wearying readers I wrote but two; and I felt flattered when G. W. Foote, whose judgment of the value of a piece of writing was beyond question—to judges—said that I ought to have written more. But in truth, as most of my readers know, the power of words ("significants") has always interested me. Words come down to us from the past loaded with hidden meanings, and they coerce to a foolish conclusion as often as they enlighten to a wise one. They are as true an index to one's mentality as one can get. Find a man who is fond of repeating the same expression and you will have found one whose thoughts are cramped, and who has become the slave of the words he uses. The man wrapped in religious ecstasy feels happy repeating the same thing day after day and year after year, until all they mean to him is the repetition of an agreeable sensation. What they stand for or what they once stood for he has no greater understanding of than a child of the physiological foundation of the pleasure it feels when it is lightly and occasionally tickled. A music hall audience will listen to the same joke for a hundred times, and look forward to its repetition on the hundred and first time with expectant and undiminished pleasure. To stand up when "God Save the King" is droned out is no sure indication of respect for the King or for the institution of Kingship (no one would dream of standing up if he were alone) or for anything else. It is no more than a conditioned reflex of the kind that modern physiology gives us. Blasphemy, as a recent writer (Stuart Clase in *The Tyranny of Words*) says, is mainly a matter of word-magic, and those writers who hold that thought is far more influenced by language than language is influenced by thought certainly have "said a mouthful," even though the truth may be a qualified one. If I could have my way I would make everyone who takes part in public affairs

or talks about them pass an examination in their knowledge of two such works as the just-issued book I have mentioned and, say, Messrs. Ogden and Richards' *Meaning of Meaning*. There is a considerable amount of literature on this subject, and whether the examiner agrees with them or not, he would at least have to run the risk of understanding the significance of most of the words he uses.

Now, although it sounds more learned to institute an enquiry into what is called "The problem of genius," than it is to say "let us study the origin of idiocy," yet the two questions, as I have often pointed out, are one. Find out how the idiot comes into existence, and I will tell you how the genius appears. It is really no more difficult to explain the being of Shakespeare than it is to account for the existence of "Jimmy" Douglas. The Bishop of London is as great a problem as is Einstein. All sorts of men and women present us with the problem of the origin of human faculty, and that is all there is in it—or to it, if I must follow the B.B.C. example of murdering English.

\* \* \*

### Our Primitives

I must offer what I have said as a kind of apology for again troubling my readers with a little further study of that absurd person Captain Ramsay, M.P., and his new Blasphemy Bill, which was brought before the House of Commons on June 28. Permission was given for it to be introduced, which means that it will be printed at the country's expense, and that will be the end of it. The aim of Captain Ramsay's Bill, when it is printed is

to prevent the participation by aliens in assemblies for the purpose of propagating blasphemous or Atheistic doctrines, or in other activities calculated to interfere with the religious institutions of Great Britain.

If there is a God, and he takes note of what goes on in the British Parliament, one can imagine him saying to himself, "save me from my friends," and looking round for a discarded thunderbolt for the benefit of Captain Ramsay. It must, however, be noted that the Captain was a little less lavish in the House with the lies concerning the International Congress than he is outside. After all, there is some difference between addressing the British Parliament and exhorting a Sunday School or a mother's meeting, and even a religious liar seldom ventures to tell his lies where he may promptly be asked for proof. So he had to be content with dark hints as to what might happen if the established religious institutions of Great Britain were seriously disturbed by alien visitors. He evidently does not fear any attack that may be made upon established institutions by natives; it is foreign intelligence operating on the assumed unintelligence of the British public that Captain Ramsay fears. The Captain's stupidity received a fitting rebuke at the hands of Mr.



Edmund Harvey, a member of the Society of Friends. But I am afraid he was talking a language that Captain Ramsay has never yet learned. The *Friend*, the organ of the Society, well says of the foolish and lying display of religious unscrupulousness against the International Congress:—

When we read over the objects of the forthcoming Congress it is interesting (and humiliating to us who are Christians) to find that the Freethinkers are rallying to save the Churches and all mankind from the pit in which we find ourselves.

Looking at the Ramsays and the Hinsleys, one wonders whether they are worth the saving.

\* \* \*

#### How We Move

But it was the language used by Captain Ramsay that set me thinking of what a power of misdirection language has when it is used by knaves and fools. He and Mr. Harvey would not understand one another because they were actually speaking in different languages. Consider the language of Captain Ramsay. And here I may say that I am a little afraid that many Freethinkers, and those professing Christians whose religion has lost its hold on them, have gone a little too far in the manner of their protests against the lies of Ramsay and Co. These survivals of mediæval ignorance habitually use language which would lead innocent people to believe that Atheism, Communism, Socialism, etc., were actually legal offences, and also as though the attempt to "interfere with the established institutions" of Great Britain was a crime. Well, it is nothing of the kind. As I said a fortnight ago it is the legal right of every person in this country to attack religion and every other institution if he sees fit. It is what reformers have always done. The people interfered with established institutions when they chopped off the head of Charles the First and established a Republic. They did the same thing when they abolished the Republic and established Charles II. They did it again when they turned out James II., or when they forced him to run away. They did it again when they took away some of the power of the aristocracy, and also when they reduced the King to being a mere mouthpiece of his Ministers. It was done when the Church was disestablished in Ireland and in Wales. All of us who are doing any work in the world worth talking about are working to interfere, not merely with established religious institutions, but with other institutions. Why, this poor creature of a Captain Ramsay is also engaged at the same game. He is trying to interfere with the institution of freedom of speech and advocacy that far better men and women than he have done so much to establish. He is even permitting himself to become the tool (one thinks a not very valuable or distinguished one) of the Roman Church which aims at upsetting the existing religious institutions and establishing others in their place. The poor fellow doesn't even realize that revolutions are always going on and that they are brought about by those men and women whom in time the world learns to honour.

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#### The Scope of Freedom

I have not the remotest faith that Captain Ramsay will understand language such as I have used. He stands for a type that is as much use to social growth as a fungus is for promoting the growth of a plant. But I wish to impress upon Freethinkers and others who are defending the right of free assembly not too readily to grant the assumptions made by the enemy. There is, for example, the use made of such terms as "Communism," "Godless," etc. The malicious lie that this Congress was a cover for Communistic propaganda was denied at once. But suppose the Congress

had been called for that purpose? What then? There is nothing illegal in advocating Communism or any social theory, and I hope that they who have claimed the right to hold this Freethought Congress would not belie the name of Freethinker by refusing to claim a similar right on behalf of others. All that is now said about Communism was once said about Radicalism and Socialism. Socialism and Communism, Conservatism and Radicalism, Anarchism and Syndicalism, all these, and others, are so many social theories to be seriously discussed, not denounced; they should be met with a serious intelligence, not with lips foaming and eyes blazing. It is the thinker, not the policeman or the semi-moronic M.P., who must in the long run determine which theory is most likely to benefit mankind. In its proper place and at the proper time I should be prepared to argue against a great many of the things for which I claim the right of publicity; but when it is proposed they be suppressed by force, then, as a Freethinker I claim that they be heard. This Congress has a right to be anything it pleases. It has a right to be "godless," and it is so, save for a handful who have not outgrown Theism; it is godless in aim and purpose. It is a Congress without God; and that is the only kind of a Congress that does the greatest good and the least harm. Bring "God" into any Congress and "God" only knows what mischief may result.

I could find some excuse for this Ramsay if he had the courage of even his bigotry, and claimed that no one in this country should be permitted to attack the Christian religion—which is what his spiritual masters desire. But to so insult British men and women as to say that while their attacks on established religious institutions may be permitted, they cannot be tolerated when coming from "aliens"! That is the thing that hurts. I do not like this implied exaltation of the intelligence of foreigners over that of British men and women. As an Englishman I resent the insult. As a mere human being I reject it as a lie.

Logic is a funny thing to mention in connexion with Captain Ramsay's name, but if he were logical he would bring in a Bill to prevent any kind of book or pamphlet from entering this country that advocated anything that would disturb our institutions. What is the use of preventing an "alien" coming to deliver an address in this country if you permit his writings to be imported, not merely in their native tongue, but in translation? It is not nice to be a bigot, yet even bigots may be consistent in their bigotry. But when foolishness and shortsightedness is added to bigotry, it lacks even the intellectual quality that may make it bearable.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

#### The Child and the "Compromise"

"We must prepare for the coming hour. The claims of the future are represented by suffering millions, and the youth of a nation are the trustees of posterity."

Disraeli.

THE pioneers of national education, realising that priestly handling of this problem had resulted in widespread illiteracy and the grossest ignorance among the masses of the people, tried hard to get education secularised. The two opposing bodies, the Churches and the pioneers, were so evenly matched that neither obtained a clear victory. The result was what is called "the Compromise," which meant that priestly authority was limited, and that the Christian fetish-book was retained in the national schools' programmes for purposes of instruction, and not for definite sectarian teaching.

In actual practice, this arrangement, like most compromises, pleased neither of the contending



parties, but it gave an advantage to the clergy which they seized readily. By packing the education committees with their catspaws, they secured the right type of teachers who could be relied upon to impart the peculiar instruction required. Thus it happens that the truth is never told the children concerning this Bible. The little ones are taught, not to regard the volume as one of the many sacred books of the East but as a fetish-book. Its legends are treated as sober history, and its ancient ignorance is tacitly assumed to be the last word in wisdom. If a teacher dares to depart from these unwritten rules, his (or her) position is endangered. In addition, the children are taught to treat the clergy with respect, which is half the battle for Priestcraft. For these reverend gentlemen like to pose as the representatives of that Providence on whose behalf they are forever soliciting alms.

The Christian Bible is unsuitable as a school-book. It would be a thankless task to enumerate the false, foolish, and wicked features of this fetish-book, but the volume is packed with barbarism from cover to cover. From the first error in the book of "Genesis" to the last absurdity in "Revelations," much of the writing is of pathological interest, although presented in exotic forms of verse. In far too many places in the Old Testament the writing is filled with the turmoil of battle, the champing of horses, the bickering of spears, the massacre of the defeated. Only on rare occasions does the still, sad voice of humanity make itself heard above the clash and trappings of tribal war. As for the New Testament, the highly-evolved moral perceptions of the twentieth century are shocked beyond expression at the awful doctrine that countless millions of the human race will suffer eternal torment. Contrary to priestly teaching, it is not theology which purifies and elevates humanity, but humanity which elevates and purifies theology. Man civilizes himself first of all, then civilizes his gods, and the priest walks warily at the rear and takes all the credit and all the cash he can lay his hands on.

Despite the latter-day apologies of the clergy, they do not desire, and never have desired, an educated population. What they mean by education is not twentieth-century culture, but the imposition of antiquated theological ideas on pupils during the years of adolescence, the most impressionable period of life. Moreover their own teaching is diametrically opposed to modern ideas, as may be seen by the steady and continuous clerical opposition to progress. Science and religion have ever been mortal enemies. Scientific teaching and investigation, or, indeed, any form of intellectual liberty, has always been incompatible with assent to the antiquarian dogmas of religion. The entire organisation of Priestcraft has always been brought to bear against science because the priests themselves know that this is a most powerful solvent of religious faith. This ages-long resistance of priests to the prevalent opinions of scientists is "four-square to all the winds that blow." When we remember that the system of Copernicus, the discoveries of Galileo, the law of gravitation of Newton, and the Darwinian theory, were each in turn received by priests with steady and organised opposition, it is highly significant. It shows clearly that the resistance was not due to the weakness of the arguments of the scientists, but to the inherent priestly hatred of the spread of secular knowledge.

The objections, too, of the priests were unscientific and an appeal to theological prejudice. Scientists were rebuked for prying into the secrets of "God," and regarded as agents of "the devil," and treated accordingly. In the Ages of Faith and Ignorance,

this meant the torture-chamber and being burnt alive. It is only in very recent times that the clergy have flattered the scientists by a pretended retreat, whilst they still teach the "old, old story" to the children in the schools, and safeguard their sorry profession for a still further period. Popular ignorance is vital to the continued prosperity of Priestcraft. It is only the religious education of children, coupled with the enormous wealth of the churches, which explains the prevalence of the Christian Superstition. The clergy dread secular education almost as much as they dread disendowment.

It is a grievous and a bitter thing that boys and girls should be taught all this mischievous theological nonsense in language which leads them to believe, and is carefully calculated to that end, that ancient oriental ignorance is the very top of knowledge, and that all who question it are accursed. It is an affront, a deadly insult, to the spirit of Democracy. Priests claim to be sacred persons, a caste apart from their fellow-men, the interpreters of a "god" to a saucy world. All this, and more in the same vein, is taught to the millions of school children, who, in later life, must in very many cases realise that all such teaching was but a synonym for a narrow, restricted, and conventional view, and justly to be judged as a survival of the last phase of Feudalism.

So much antiquarian rubbish, so much absolute nonsense, so much that is positively mischievous is embedded between the covers of the Christian Bible that it is not a profitable book for children, and by no means suited as an educational text-book. And the strange, frantic theological theories built upon this antiquated foundation are in direct conflict with ascertained knowledge. Man's place in nature is better understood to-day than in the dark days when the silly legend of a talking serpent in the imaginary Garden of Eden was considered a sufficient authority for the terrible idea of the fall of man and the fiery damnation of the human race. And the work which Freethinkers have set themselves is that of freeing their fellow-men from the absurdities of pre-scientific times which are perpetuated by this Oriental fetish-book. To class this alleged sacred work as a book of ordered knowledge is absurd. It is a volume of riotous, exuberant, Oriental imagination, not very unlike the "Arabian Nights." If it had not been associated with a money-making system of superstition, it would, centuries ago, have been forgotten, save by a small number of Oriental scholars.

The plain, unvarnished fact is that in this country national education has been hampered by the desire of the clergy, of whom there are 40,000, to ally religious teaching with the ordinary school curriculum. This desire has been complicated still further by the furious dissensions among the many warring sects of Christians. The teachings of the Established Church are considered by the Nonconformists to be wrong and harmful, whilst the instruction given by Dissenters is pronounced by Churchmen, High and Low, to be heretical and dangerous. Roman Catholics, in their turn, consider that Anglicans and Free Churchmen are alike so monstrous that they provide their own schools. All the combined sects regard Unitarianism with high-sniffing contempt.

The retention of their fetish-book in the national schools is of much import to the clergy, for they use it as the thin edge of the wedge in order to impede education and fetter progress. But, in spite of all the efforts of Priestcraft, its power is decaying. The conscience of the race is slowly rising above its credities and its barbarities, which are as plain as a pike-staff. What do our kindergarten teachers, for



instance, make of such inspired Biblical advice as "a rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding"; "Thou shalt beat him with a rod"; "Chasten thy son, and let not thy soul spare for his crying." And what is to be said for the text: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." Such alleged divine injunctions may receive the blessings and approbation of all the clergy of Christendom, but they remain the essence of barbarism. This fetish-book is inconsistent with present-day ethics, common sense, and ascertainable knowledge, and, sooner or later, it will have to be so regarded in spite of the Christian Religion being a huge vested interest entrenched behind millions of dead men's money. For the living will not always consent to walk in the footsteps of the dead.

MIMNERMUS.

## Economic and Social Patterns in Early Christianity

(Continued from page 421)

### IV. CRISIS AND FUTURE

At this stage of social development there is no means of harmonizing method and relationship. Men look back with deepening regret to the communal forms of the clan. Hence fantasies of the Garden of Eden, of the Golden Age. But these fantasies are informed with the content of the new productive methods, and they therefore draw an entirely unrealistic picture of the lost world of communal life.<sup>12</sup>

Christianity was born out of the ferments resulting from the creation of the Roman Empire. The Cæsarian civil wars wrested the power from the hands of the Roman oligarchy and vastly increased middle-class prosperity throughout the Mediterranean. But this advance was at the cost of the peasant and serf or slave masses. Hence the terrible recoil of despair.

Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand. (Matt. iv. 17).

The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent ye, and believe in the gospel. (Mark i. 15.)

I tell you, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. (Luke xiii.) The time is shortened, that henceforth both those that have wives may be as though they had none and those that weep, as though they wept not and those that rejoice, as though they possessed not; and those that buy as though they passed away. (1. Cor. vii. 1-7.)

That is the basic cry of the Gospels. A cry which has broken out in full vehemence whenever the Christian symbols have been touched into vitality by the pressure of fear. The Redeemer is to come "as the lightning, when it lighteneth out of the one part under the heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven." With the fury, sudden and unexpected, of the Flood and the Burning of the Cities of the Plain; "not with observation"; "like a thief in the night."<sup>13</sup>

The coming has two aspects. One is the Judgment. The other is the Glorification of the Faithful. "Seek

<sup>12</sup> The admission of this is to be seen in an epigram by Antipater of Thessalonica (fl. 15 B.C.), which is of the utmost psychological importance for the unravelling of the Golden Age theme. Antipater welcomes a mechanical water-wheel, declaring that "Demeter has appointed nymphs" to turn it. "So again we savour the delights of ancient days, taught to eat the fruits of Mother Earth in idle ease." Here is the embryonic realization that to actualize the dream of plenty meant to develop technique.

<sup>13</sup> Mark ix. 1; Luke xvi. 21-31.

ye first the Kingdom of God, and all these things (food and drink, etc.) will be added unto you." The Kingdom is thus the actualization of the Bond promised by Faith.<sup>14</sup>

In the imagery of the Judgment are included elements from all the religious musings of the peoples of the Eastern Mediterranean. Elements that we see writ large in the Egyptian death-myths, in the Gnostic visions in the folk-hopes of the Sibylline verses. The Kingdom gathers all the imagery of the afterlife fantasies developed out of agricultural rites. It is a Treasure, a goodly pearl, to procure which one may well sacrifice all one's possessions; the righteous shall shine forth in it as the Sun in heaven, while all that do iniquity shall be cast out; it is a place of blessedness, where the patriarchs dwell.

Two ideas are merged here. The Kingdom results from change of heart and from the reversal of the frame of things. *Metanoia* and *Palingenesis*. But in the general cleavage, which we have analysed above, there is no effort made to unite these two aspects, the inner and the outer. At one turn it seems that the moment of Faith is the new world; at another all the converts wait anxiously on the apocalyptic revolution from without. Because of the cleavage between inner and outer, no attempt is conceived as able to bring into action the *Palingenesis*. (Although a few Christians probably did begin fires in the hopes of starting off a cosmic conflagration.) The cloven individual waits in hypnotized fear and exaltation for the great new birth, the *Palingenesis* of the whole frame of things, to arrive in its own time. He waits on historical process; his conviction of grace is the emotion which enable men to get through all the dark centuries ahead; but at the moment of crisis he sees the whole pattern of pang and reconciliation spread out in "timeless" design, and he seeks frantically to merge with that pattern. . . . Then, as the crisis weakens, the conviction of grace can be used in diluted forms to console and hearten men and women for the "lost Eden."

The question of Time or actual process has thus been tied up in insoluble knots. The great change is simultaneously shut out into an unknowable future and brought into terrible immediacy as the demand for a change of heart. The inability to control the historical process in its totality (which is in fact the reflection of the slave-economy in which these emotions arise) produces this sense of utter dependency; but at the same time the great growth of socialized method, the enormous drawing-together of men at work and the breaking down of old barriers over great areas in the centralized Roman State, produces the new quality of social conscience. Baffled, this social conscience can only fall back on the urgent sense of inner responsibility. If the *palingenesis*, the renewal of the world without, must wait on an inscrutable "will," an ungraspable historical process, yet the individual can change himself in preparation, can become worthy of the purified and redeemed world that is to supplant the world of bondage. Hence, as far as action is concerned, all emphasis goes on *metanoia*, the change of heart.

This emphasis is helped by the fact that in early Christianity the change of the outward world was considered as imminent; it might come any second. The Messiah, who will bring about the *palingenesis*, was expected momentarily with the thunder of judgment. The revolutionary change would occur as an ending of "the present age" (*ho aion houtos*) and the creation of "the age to come" (*ho aion mellon*).

One important point emerges from these terms. The renewed world of *palingenesis*, the age to come, is identical with the Elysian Fields, *ta elysia pedia*.

<sup>14</sup> Matt. vi. 33. Cf. Luke xii. 31; Matt. vi. 10; viii. 11; xiii. 41-6.



For *elysios* is derived from a participle which is synonymous with *mellon*. The Fields of the Future, common to so many animistic visions of afterdeath, find their most striking imagery in Egyptian and Greek myth; and they reappear in the Christian concept of the Age to Come, though on a new level of social relationships.

But through the whole problem of Time or actual development is thus dissolved in the sense of inner urgency, there is implicit in these concepts a sense that the world is moving towards a reversal of present values of bondage; and in time this sense was to sow the seeds of a deepening perception of social process. But on account of the cleavage between the inner and outer world in these concepts no direct social programme of action could detach itself. Speed up the pressure of crisis at any moment, and instead of fusing inner and outer, the individual merely retreated more painfully once more into the need to stabilize his change of heart, to be worthy of the great day of judgment when it did come. The sense of development cannot unfold itself, for the individual cannot achieve any conviction of his power to change the outer world. He is still at the mercy of the inscrutable power, and must await a deliverer from without. The more he feels the need for rescue from without, the more he retreats into his inner world. There is the feeling that if he can only create an inner perfection, he will somehow reach the point in time when the redeemer comes, and will thus compel the redeemer to come. The conviction of Salvation is the new world. But such a one-sided effort can never complete itself, and thus the saint's attempts at a perfect renunciation of the world, a complete stabilization of self, can only result in a complex of veering moods of exaltation and despair, hope and horrible oppression of danger.

We see the collapse coming when the desire for *palingenesis*, for a redeemed external world, which is so strong an ingredient of the original Christian scheme, begins to lose all its social colouring and to be no more than a symbol of *metanoia*. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."<sup>15</sup> The desire for outer change, feeling itself quite hopeless, pretends that it is only a metaphor for inner change.

<sup>15</sup> 2 Cor. v. 17.

JACK LINDSAY.

(To be continued)

[I must apologize for misprints in the second section of my serial essay. Owing to pressure of work, I posted off the proofs after having corrected them only in my imagination. "Pits" in the third line should have been "puts"; and in the root-analysis of *fides*, the second line should read "Greek *peilho*, *persuadere*, *peisma* cable;"—J.L.]

The vain crowds wandering blindly led by lies.

Lucretius.

#### ABOUT WEST AFRICA

The missionary places at one end of the scale transubstantiation. The Government power places at the other end of the scale the death penalty for eating human flesh. The political subdivision of the negro does not save him from tasting the extreme penalty and extreme unktion together. Whether he has the fortune to find himself classified as a *citizen of France* in the French colonies, or a *bloody nigger* in the British, the result is the same: eat God's flesh and go to heaven; eat black man's flesh and go to hell.

National Review, August, 1930.

## The Bible in English

### II.

WE are having, at the moment, a deluge of the kind of panegyric employed by the Church whenever it sees an opportunity of boosting the Bible. The gallant English gentleman, the renowned Defender of the Faith, Henry VIII., put the whole world in his debt when he issued the following decree:—

One Boke of the whole Bible, of the largest volume, in Englyshe, and the same sett up in summe convenient place within the Church that ye have the cure of, wherat your parishioners may most commodiously resort to the same and rede yt.

This injunction is supposed to have been made in 1538, but I must confess to have found some difficulty in finding out which Bible was the one thus honoured. If it was the one known as the "Great Bible" (as claimed, for example, in a recent number of the *Church Times*), how comes it that the first edition was not published till 1539? As a matter of fact, no fewer than seven editions of this version appeared in three years, each of which, we are told, "was more or less revised." The editor-in-chief was Miles Coverdale, who had, in 1535, produced a new translation, which is known as Coverdale's Bible, actually the first *complete* Bible printed in English. It was a translation based upon the Vulgate, and upon Luther's into German; and Coverdale seems to have had great difficulty in getting anybody to buy a copy. In fact, the publisher had to reissue the work with a new title page, so as to give buyers the impression that they were getting a different Bible.

In 1538 the printer of this edition produced another one containing only the New Testament; and another one containing both the English and the Latin versions. This seems to have been so incorrect that Coverdale had to have another edition with many corrections. All the versions of the Bible printed about this time appear to be packed with errors, or notes and glosses reflecting the private opinions of the translators, or the editors or patrons of the particular edition printed. And one thing does emerge from these attempts to give the Bible to the English people, and that is, the violent quarrels and hatred engendered by the various editions of the Holy Word.

Tyndale was always quarrelling with his assistants, and Coverdale himself had to flee England after the death of Thomas Cromwell, who was his patron. It is interesting to note that Coverdale, who had taken the vow of celibacy, married abroad and earned a living by teaching in Bergzabern. Later he was imprisoned by "Bloody Mary," but managed to fly abroad again.

The Great Bible, as it was called, was undoubtedly a better work than Coverdale's, though he was responsible for both. It was produced by order of Cromwell; but at his death it became naturally "suspect." Its sale was prohibited until the bishops could examine the translation—a task which they seemed to have shirked. In any case, the people of England who, we are constantly told, were thirsting for the Bible actually were "hostile to a vernacular Bible"; and Dore points out that "a number of injunctions and even penal laws were required to force it into circulation."

The price of the Great Bible was fixed at 10s. unbound, or 12s. bound—about £8 or £9 in our own money. A good many parishes were unable to afford the luxury of buying a copy at this price, so it was often reduced. For example, there is an entry in Ashburton as follows:—



A.D. 1540-1. Paid vs. iiijd. for a new booke called a Bybyll; Paid viijd. for a chaine for fastenyng the sayde booke.

From Bishop Stortford we have:—

A.D. 1542. For a newe Bybill and ye byngyng home of it, vjs. and jd.

Probably the Bible which was first ordered to be read in churches was the one known as Matthew's Bible, published about 1537. This version is a mixture of Tyndale and Coverdale, and was edited or revised by John Rogers, who assumed the name of Thomas Matthew, to "conceal the fact that a considerable part of this Bible was the translation of Tyndale, whose writings had been condemned by the English authorities." Whatever may be thought of Tyndale and his unjust fate there can be no question that his version was packed with errors, and was justly condemned by his superiors. Either the Church had the right to vindicate its authority, or it had not. If it had, then Tyndale's translation had to be suppressed; and it was denounced both by the Court and the Church.

But with Tyndale and Coverdale and Matthew and Taverner, all producing versions packed with "heretical" notes, or glosses, or false translations, the question of the Bible for England (the inhabitants of which, we are told, have become famed as the "People of the Book") really becomes farcical. And it is admitted by quite a number of writers that to imagine that "ploughmen and shepherds in the country read the New Testament by stealth, or that smiths and carpenters in towns pored over its pages in the corner of their master's workshops is to mistake the character and acquirements of the age." One would really like some evidence that the "vulgar," as they used to be called, could read at all. The great majority of the inhabitants of this country right down to the middle of the nineteenth century were almost illiterate.

In his little work, *Where We Got the Bible*, the Roman Catholic Rev. H. G. Graham quotes from the last speech of Henry VIII. made to Parliament:—

I am extremely sorry to find how much the Word of God is abused; with how little reverence it is mentioned; how people squabble about the sense; how it is turned into wretched rhymes, sung and jangled in every ale-house and tavern; and all this in false construction and countermeaning to the inspired writers. I am sorry to perceive the readers of the Bible discover little of it in their practice; for I am sure charity was never in a more languishing condition, virtue never at a lower ebb, nor God himself less honoured or worse served in Christendom.

There is such a modern ring about these despairing words that one could imagine them uttered by many a modern preacher facing the growth of unbelief. But whatever else they show they do at least prove that the reading of the Bible in English was not quite that heaven-sent blessing which our modern eulogizers want us to believe.

The Bible of 1538 was hopeless; so were most of the succeeding ones. One of the most popular was that known as the Geneva, and it had a large circulation. Here is a specimen note, added to the text Rev. ix. 3: "Locusts are false teachers, heretics and wordly subtil prelates, with monks, friars, cardinals, patriarchs, archbishops, bishops, doctors, bachelors, masters, which forsake Christ to maintain false doctrine." The gentleman responsible for this obviously did not wish to leave anybody out of his list, and he gives, in addition, a fine example of Christian love; and all engendered by the Bible too.

The people who are acclaiming the Bible these days say as little as possible about the old versions, or about the squabbles, and the quarrelling, and the hatred which followed their publication. They are on much

safer ground when they deal with the literary qualities of the Authorized Version. Here they can give rein to their hosannahs. But their praise is becoming super-praise. The Authorized Version—from "the pure well of English undefiled" point of view—is greater than ever. Even Shakespeare has to retreat in the face of the overwhelming torrent of blandiloquence, which is being poured out in such profusion whenever and wherever the representatives of the Church get the chance.

Perhaps we Freethinkers should not complain if our priests and parsons are stressing the literary qualities of the Authorized Version rather than its divine. It is the secular point of view; and once you let the secular dominate the religious side of the Bible it spells the death of "inspiration."

H. CUTNER.

## Christ and Serapis

"Out of Egypt have I called my Son."—Matt. ii. 15.

THE Emperor Hadrian (76-138 A.D.) was certainly one of the most enlightened rulers who ever wore the purple. Perceiving that the vast provinces of the Roman Empire were no less its weakness than its glory, he made it the work of his life to become acquainted with their needs and improve their resources. To obtain personal knowledge of the varied races he had to govern, he left Rome in 119, and visited all his dominions, leaving everywhere traces of his beneficent energy.

After visiting Egypt, he wrote a letter to his kinsman, Servianus, the significance of which, as a document throwing light on early Christianity, has been generally overlooked. Christian Evidence writers, save the laborious, learned, and lumbering Lardner, carefully avoid this early testimony to their faith; and sceptics, with the exception of the not always to be safely followed Rev. Robert Taylor,<sup>1</sup> have hardly shown themselves alive to its importance. Yet if we put aside the possibly spurious passages in Tacitus and Pliny, it remains the very first unquestionably heathen testimony to the existence of Christianity.

I transcribe the passage as given in Lardner, with the date—134. It cannot be later, as in that year Hadrian returned to Rome:—

Adrian Augustus to the consul Servianus wisheth health. I have found Egypt, my dear Servianus, which you commended to me, all over fickle and inconstant, and continually shaken by the slightest reports of fame. The worshippers of Serapis are Christians, and they are devoted to Serapis who call themselves Christ's bishops. There is no ruler of the Jewish Synagogue, no Samaritan, no presbyter of the Christians, no mathematician, no soothsayer, no anointer, even the patriarch, if he should come to Egypt would be required by some to worship Serapis, by others Christ. A seditious and turbulent sort of people. However, the city is rich and populous. Nor are any idle. Some are employed in making glass, others paper, others in weaving linen. They have one God, Him the Christians, Him the Jews, Him all the Gentile people worship.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *Diegesis*, p. 189-194 and 386, Truelove's edition.

<sup>2</sup> Taylor's free rendering gives better the spirit and purport of the passage, "Egypt, which you commended to me, my dearest Servianus, I have found to be wholly fickle and inconstant, and continually wasted about by every breath of fame. The worshippers of Serapis are Christians, and those are devoted to the God Serapis, who I find call themselves bishops of Christ. There is here no ruler of a Jewish synagogue, no Samaritan, no Presbyter of Christians, who is not either an astrologer, a soothsayer, or a minister to obscene pleasures." [Aptles slaves who anointed those who went



Hadrian was of a serious and religious nature. Christians fabled that he proposed to set up the statue of Christ among the gods at Rome. There can be no doubt that although his letter is written in the light and cynical character affected in correspondence between friends, he had fully informed himself of the subject upon which he was writing. He had, indeed, but a little previously suppressed, at immense cost to his army, an insurrection of the Jews under one of their many Christs, the famous Barcochobas, or "Son of the Star," and could not but take the deepest political interest in the varied faiths seething in the East and thence making their way even to Rome.

No ingenuity can get over this testimony of a competent observer, that the worship of Serapis and of Christ were then closely related if not identical. Serapis in the Leyden papyrus signifying Osiris-Apis—meaning the dead Apis worshipped as Osiris and so the lord of the Underworld—was the chief deity of the Egyptians from the time of the Ptolemies, who by the elevation of this deity gradually assimilated the old Osiris worship with the Greek worship of Pluto or Hades. The very core of the Egyptian religion from at least 3000 B.C. lay in the doctrine of the resurrection of their dead. For this they built their magnificent tombs and embalmed their mummies. They hoped that, even as the sun, conquered by the powers of darkness, died in the west, passed through the underworld and rose again in the east in the morning, so the human soul would, after death, by the help of the sun-god Osiris, dying with him and with him overcoming the evil spirits of the underworld, rise again with him in the triumph of day. This is the great theme of the Egyptian sacred books in which can be traced the whole story of a god miraculously born, dying, and rising again from the dead. The worship of Serapis was the culmination of this old faith when Egypt had been brought under Greek and Roman sway. Probably influenced by Buddhism the worship became largely ascetic.

Professor Hermann-Weingarten, author of a work on the origin of monkery, in his articles "Monastery and Monasticism," contributed to Dr. P. Schaff's *Religious Encyclopædia*, says:—

In the Serapis temples there lived, completely secluded from the world, whole congregations of monks. After giving away their property to the poor, they retired to the temples, where they lived upon the bread which their relatives brought to them. The purpose of this renunciation was wholly ethical—the purification of the soul; and as the whole form of the asceticism of the Serapis monks corresponded peculiarly well with the sombre character of the Egyptian worship of the dead and the graves, they were much revered by the Egyptian people; indeed, like the bulls of Apis, they were considered as incarnations of the Deity. No wonder, then, that when Christianity became the popular religion of Egypt, the peculiar form of Egyptian religious life, but one in which a deep popular instinct had found its adequate expression, silently glided into the Christian Church. Just as the Christian stylite saints of the fifth century were a mere imitation of the stylite saints of the Syrian Astarte, so the Christian monks of the fourth century were a simple imitation of the Egyptian monks of Serapis.

The monkery of Christianity, however, goes back much further than the fourth century, and indeed dates from the Therapeutæ, those contemplative monks of Egypt, who are described by Philo, the contemporary of Christ, and who Eusebius, the first

to the baths.] "The very patriarch himself, should he come into Egypt, would be required by some to worship Serapis, by others to worship Christ. They have, however, but one God, and it is one and the self-same whom Christians, Jews, and Gentiles alike adore—i.e., money."

Christian historian, emphatically declares were Christians.

How readily the Egyptian beliefs found their way to Rome, despite a law of Augustus prohibiting them, we have evidence in Horace, who tells us that the beggar would ask for alms in the name of Osiris; while Juvenal says the painters of the city almost lived upon Isis, such was the popularity of that Virgin Mother of God. The Emperor Domitian gave way to public opinion, and built in Rome a temple to Serapis, and another to Isis. Though these were converted to Christ's uses, travellers may still see the ruins of a temple of Serapis at Pozzuoli and that of Isis at Pompeii.

The Christian historian, Socrates, relates with surprise that when the Serapion at Alexandria was destroyed (for as soon as Christianity became predominant, it could not tolerate the rival faiths from which it had sprung), they discovered the sign of the cross. This was, of course, the crux ansata, the *ank* found in the Book of the Dead, and on monuments dating 3000 years B.C., where it stands for the sign of life, one of the most cherished and common of Egyptian symbols.

From the time of the Ptolemies Alexandria was the great centre of communication between East and West. There were "dwelling devout men from every nation under heaven." One-third of its inhabitants were Jews, but Jews severed from their temple, and influenced by Greek philosophy and by Egyptian religion. An eclectic faith was the natural outcome of the situation. The materials were all at hand. To dispense with circumcision must, to many, have been a gospel of comfort and joy. The letter of Hadrian shows that early in the second century Christianity had not entirely disengaged itself from the Egyptian faith, and is one of the many proofs that Christianity dates, not from Jerusalem but from Alexandria.

(Reprinted) J. M. WHEELER.

## Acid Drops

Mr. A. P. Herbert suggested to the House of Commons, the other day, that at the end of the financial year the Entertainment Tax should be abolished. He described the tax as a tax on laughter. We do not think it is wholly that, but it is partly that, and the religious section of the British public have not yet outgrown the Christian influence which suggested that all amusement had in it a dose of "sin." Mr. Herbert said that no civilized people puts a tax on mind. That can only be admitted at the expense of ruling out a fair number of the so-called civilized States. As a matter of fact there is a very heavy tax on mind in Germany, Italy and elsewhere, and it is not done in a disguised form. It is open and avowed. And it is only yesterday that we refrained from openly taxing mind in this country. Now we do it in terms of social and business ostracism. The man who exercises his mind freely and openly has always to pay for it, and will continue to do so until the world becomes truly civilized.

But we would suggest, as a far better thing, a tax on sorrow. If every one had to pay for this there would be a really great effort to remove it. Perhaps a good way to do this would be to put a tax on every case of sorrow, then pool the whole and share out the fine as "sorrow tax" on the same lines that we share out income tax. One can imagine how those patriotic aristocrats who turn themselves into limited companies in order to dodge death duties might even then do something to dodge all avoidable sorrow. Even the Bishops and Archbishops might sit up and take notice.



When the German governing gang made its piratical entry into Austria, the chief concern of the "City" was what would happen to Austrian loans. Soon after it was announced that the German Government would not take over the responsibility for the debts to Britain of Austria. At once Mr. Chamberlain and his Cabinet acted. They served notice on Germany that it would be held responsible, and "demanded" the honouring of the financial obligations. The same took place when Mexico confiscated the oil wells, in which many millions of British money was invested. It is now announced that "under pressure" Germany will pay a fair rate of interest (ranging from four-and-a-half to five per cent) on the British loans. Now good-will reigns once more. When it happens to be a case of the murder and robbery of old men, women and children, or the sinking of British ships, Mr. Chamberlain and his Cabinet are "sorry" "distressed," "concerned," and may even get angry if these things continue. But the offenders are assured of our good-will, respect, and even confidence in their honesty, and assurance of our continued friendship. Mr. Chamberlain says that this country will interfere whenever British interests are concerned. Now we know the nature of what Mr. Chamberlain considers "British interests." It is the interest on loans that matter. We sympathize with Lord Hugh Cecil in the wish that Gladstone were alive and with us. We think he would have discovered some interests other than those attaching to monetary debts.

Sir John Simon has also congratulated Mr. Chamberlain on having so successfully achieved a peaceful settlement of the loan business. But no one in his senses would imagine that the German Government came to this conclusion of their own good-will. It is entirely because of the pressure brought upon the Germans that the arrangement has been concluded. Which illustrates what we have said. Where money is at stake pressure may be used. But where the interests of humanity and common decency is in question, then we may merely express a polite regret. Some of us may wish it were the other way about. Messrs. Chamberlain and Simon have illustrated what they mean by "the interests of the country."

The Chief Rabbi and the Archbishop of Canterbury have called upon Jews and Christians in the Empire to "lay the distress of their brethren before God in special services in Churches and synagogue." It should be done in House of Commons' language. "Has the Lord God, who knows everything, had his attention called to the treatment of his chosen people in various parts of the world, and does he intend to take such steps as will remove a situation that is causing much distress to many of his faithful followers, and which may lead to weaken their allegiance to him?"

It is not a matter of very great importance, but Canon Anthony Dean points out that the date of the placing of the English Bible in Churches was in 1541, and therefore the commemoration is not really due. But in religious history it is not usual to permit mere facts to destroy an advertisement of the Church. If all the mistakes and the deliberate lies that litter the history of the Christian Church were set on one side there would be very little of consequence left.

We are not aware that anyone has noticed it, but one of the things that followed making the English people familiar with the Bible was the era of witchcraft persecution. Of course, giving the people the Bible did not introduce witch-hunting, but it brought home God's command, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," to those who became strongly impressed by the Bible, and in the seventeenth century there raged one of the most brutal and ignorant crusades against witches that is presented by English history. And this was only finally checked by the growth of science and Freethinking at the end of the seventeenth century. We may be writing on this subject at some length.

The one certain thing is that if we were to collect and print only those portions of the Bible on which Christians were agreed, there would exist a mere pamphlet. But we wish people would read the Bible as it is, with a copy of the *Bible Handbook* and an up-to-date anthropological study of religion as guides.

We are glad to see a reviewer of a recent book *A Searchlight on Bible History* pointing out that the "light" is only a dazzle, "history" is of no consequence. If one were to admit that all the nonsensical inferences from digging up pottery, etc., in Ur, and otherwise were accepted at their face value what would they amount to? The Christian truth of the Bible does not consist in telling us what evidence there is that the Jews existed, and that they did something or the other, or that they believed certain things. That kind of evidence is of no value whatever to religious belief in the Bible. It is like trying to prove that Charles II. could miraculously cure scrofula with a touch because he "touched" people and people believed it did them good, and because we can show that Charles II. existed.

The religious, the Christian, value of the Bible consists in the accounts of God's dealing with man—that he caused the walls of Jericho to fall through the blast of a trumpet, that Jonah was swallowed by a whale through the agency of God, that God gave ten commandments to Moses in the midst of thunder and lightning, and so forth. How are these things shown to be true because one discovers a bit of ancient wall that might have belonged to a place called Jericho, and evidence of that kind? Nothing better proves the foolish dishonesty of Christian writers and the chronic foolishness of Christian readers than these religious "searchlights" on Bible history.

A correspondent of the *Christian World* enquires as to the nature of the "Holy Spirit." He is advised to remember that "The word used for spirit means breath, but it is not mere natural wind. It denotes something mysterious, supernatural, luminous." We hope the correspondent is satisfied. The one clear thing is that the "Holy Spirit" is just wind. There is certainly more wind than wisdom about it.

We see that the Rev. Leslie Weatherhead is resuming work at the City Temple. Bad health, and the advice of Lord Horder, led him to take a prolonged rest. He is now feeling better. Mr. Weatherhead was great on "spiritual healing," and held regular meetings for its practice. But the "power of the Spirit" could apparently do nothing in his case. We suppose it is easier to "kid" other people than it is to kid oneself. We use the word "kid" without any sinister meaning. It is quite possible to "kid" oneself, and indeed this very often occurs.

### [Fifty Years Ago

WHEN one looks steadily at modern growths of superstition, and then at primitive Christianity, does one not see that they are all of the same family? Credulity carried to the verge of imbecility; implicit trust in godly leaders; childish simplicity in money matters, and unlimited faith in the wildest promises; such are the common characteristics of all these movements. Christianity, according to its own documents, began like the successful fanaticisms of our own age; and when we remember that it was started nearly two thousand years ago, that the people were then incredibly ignorant, that the miraculous was their staple mental food, that there were no printing-presses and cheap papers, and that mendacity and imposture were almost unchecked—is it any wonder that Christianity went farther than its modern imitations, or that by the time of Constantine it had grown sufficiently to become a potent agency of despotism and spoliation in the hands of priests and emperors?

*The Freethinker*, July 8, 1888.



# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

E. R. RUSSELL.—Your letter in the local press should do some good.

T. ARMSTRONG.—We have never known Freethinkers gain anything by either setting out to please Christians or trying to avoid offending them. The only policy that pays—morally and intellectually—is for Freethinkers to state their policy, social claims, and opinions, fearlessly. That does command the respect and attention of those Christians who are better than their creed, and also the support of all Freethinkers who are worthy of their name. Considering whether what one is doing will “offend” Christians or not is like trying to save the Spaniards by not giving offence to General Franco, Mussolini and Co.

H. BERLIS.—Thanks for address of likely new reader; paper being sent for four weeks.

H. SYLVESTER.—Thanks for compliment. G.B.S. once introduced himself—in his earlier days—to a public meeting as “a vegetarian, a republican and an atheist.” In those days he probably had clearer ideas of what ought to be meant when men used the term “God.”

J. WALTON.—Next week. Letter crowded out from this issue.

J. RYTWISTLE.—We are much obliged for your kind help and practical assistance; paper being sent to addresses.

H. MURPHY.—Obliged for useful cuttings. Have filed for future use.

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 connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, R. H. Roselli, 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

Arrangements are now well in hand for the Congress of the International Union of Freethinkers on September 9-13. On the evening of Friday, September 9, there will be a Reception and Social Evening. On Saturday there will be three meetings at the Conway Hall at 10.30, subject for discussion, “Present Religious Reaction and the Menace of the Vatican”; at 2.30, “Youth, the Schools and Freethought”; at 7, “Science and the Churches.” On Sunday, at 10.30, “The Reality of a Secular Ethic”; at 2.30, “Reports on the Situation of Freethought in Different Countries”; at 7, “Freethought and the Struggle for Peace and Freedom.” On Monday 10.30, Reports from different countries and resolutions. 2.30, Tour of London, 6.30, Reception and Dinner at the Treaders Restaurant. Tuesday, Visit to the Bradlaugh Tomb, Brookwood.

Admission to all the meetings will be free, but admission to the meetings on Saturday, Sunday (with the exception of the evening public meeting) and Monday will

be by ticket only. These will be issued to members and their friends by the four organizations responsible for the Congress. Application must be made to the Secretaries of the four Societies. For the Sunday evening Public Demonstration there will be a number of reserved seats, and early application should be made for these. There will be a charge of 10s. 6d. for the Dinner on the Monday evening, and the fare (2s.) to Brookwood on Tuesday. Tickets for the reserved seats, and also for admission to the ordinary meetings, will be free. Early application should be made for Brookwood tickets to acquaint the railway company of the size of the party.

A four-page leaflet giving full programme of the “Godless Conference” with list of the names of those well-known men and women who have associated themselves with it, has been printed, and can be had free on application at the office of the *Freethinker*. If more than one copy is required they can be had.

A friendly, but not over well-informed article on Freethought and the International Congress, by J. S. Clarke, appears in the *Glasgow Record and Mail*, for June 27. Mr. Clarke ends his article by saying:—

It is time common sense and common decency triumphed over prejudice and bigotry. Do not stir up the rancorous mud of so-called “religious” prejudice of the last century which made men like Bradlaugh, Holyoake and Foote martyrs in the sense that any of the Covenanters were.

Well, it was not “so-called” religious prejudice and bigotry that was responsible for the hundreds of disgraceful attacks on Freethought, it was religious bigotry pure and undefiled. It was the sort of ignorance and bigotry of men like Captain Ramsay and his kind that made the persecutions possible. There is no other circumstance that will explain the situation.

Mr. Clarke says that one ignores the Commandment “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.” “To do so is blasphemy, and blasphemy is crime in law as well as in holy writ.” We leave Mr. Clarke to fight it out with the parsonry, but we can assure him that this is *not* blasphemy at law. “Gawd blimey” is not legal blasphemy, or “S’welp me Gawd,” is not blasphemy at law. The latter may be, in certain circumstances, perjury, the former may be stupid, but neither of them constitute legal blasphemy, and, if used with seriousness, are unquestionably expressions of genuine religious feeling. And it must be due to confusion that Mr. Clarke adds that “Men and women who cannot speak without using obscene words, cannot argue without mouthing a cataract of vulgarity, they deserve to be curbed by law.” This implied opinion that the blasphemy laws are maintained to protect the public against actual obscenity is simply not true. “Obscenity” is prohibited by the ordinary law, and its association with Atheism or Freethinking is just an example of religious prejudice and religious lying. “Vulgarity” cannot be prohibited by law. It is a question of taste, and is exhibited in all classes of society from the university to the elementary school, and from the crown to the crossing-sweeper. Mr. Clarke means to be friendly and fair, but he has a bad way of showing it.

Finally there is his use of the phrase “Anti-God.” He says:—

The Freethought Conference, which is referred to as the anti-God Conference, is not anti-God at all.

Now I decline to take shelter against this charge of being Anti-God by pleading “Not Guilty.” In any honest sense of the word the Conference is against the idea of God. There may be a few, very few, among the members who indulge in some vague form of Theism, but their “God” has nothing in common with the God of any religion, and it is certain that the majority would regard their attitude as a survival of a frame of thought they ought to have outgrown. But the Conference leaves God out, and any man or woman who put in a plea for a god would have a—controversially—“warm time.” If the World Union of Freethinkers does not make for the destruction of the god-idea, then we have woefully mistaken its character and influence!



But we decline to appeal to the good-will of Christians on the ground that we are not opposed to their belief in God. We demand the right to criticize the belief in God, not in secret, or in veiled phrases, or with an apology for doing so, but openly, uncompromisingly, and in plain language. Atheism is not, and never has been an offence at English law; the right to criticize and to advocate the abolition of any institution that exists is the legal right of every British man or woman, whatever ignoramus may think to the contrary, and however much time-serving politicians such as Sir Samuel Hoare may wish did not exist. Mr. Clarke says:—

Truth will never prevail by padlocking the lips of honest men.

We may add, that until men and women cease to be afraid of saying quite plainly what they believe is the truth, and claim the right to say it without excuses and apologies, and to label as among the most dangerous of criminals those who deny what is a fundamental condition of social progress, there will be no real safeguard against the effective denial of intellectual liberty.

We are very grateful to Christians of the "Dear Ramsay" type for their valuable help in advertising the World Union of Freethinkers' International Congress in London in September. There is a marked increase in the enquiries concerning the N.S.S., its work, and the coming Congress, also in the applications for our literature. Living examples of what a mess Christianity can make of a man are more convincing than statements.

We print this week an article by Mr. J. Walton, following a resolution discussed at the N.S.S. Conference, on the abuse by the Churches, and chapels of the law which relieves places of religious worship from the payment of rates and taxes. This relief is given only on condition that the buildings are not used for secular purposes. Christian ethical sentiment is never strong enough to refrain from dishonesty, verbal, material, or mental, when the interests of religion are concerned, and this rule is constantly being broken in many parts of the country. We should like our readers to take Mr. Walton's article as an appeal to Freethinkers all over the country to secure whatever cases of wrongful relief can be traced, and then send the information to us. It is no use sending hearsay or probable cases, we must have the actual and verifiable facts if anything is to be done. When the information is collected and collated the N.S.S. could then see what legal or other steps it is advisable to take.

## Jew-Baiting Up-to-Date

JEW-BAITING in Germany is one of the oldest of Germanic institutions. In Czarist Russia it also existed in a virulent form, and its existence is not unknown elsewhere. But in Britain for the past two and half centuries Jews have been treated with increasing fairness, although there has always been in existence a guarded form of anti-semitism. The Jew is always a convenient scapegoat, and religious bigotry has always been the soil from which it has sprung. But, on the whole, anti-Semitism has not taken a great hold on the British public. It is probable that the ordinary Britisher has at the back of his mind a suspicion of a truth voiced by the editor of this paper, that "the problem of the Jew is created by the Christian, not by the Jew."

A specimen of the kind of anti-Semitism that exists in this country was exhibited in an article, filled with spirit that lets "I dare not wait upon I will,"

which appeared in the *Evening Standard* of June 28, by Mr. George Malcolm Thompson. The most

thing that can be said of it is that it is without an understanding of the subject with which it deals; the hardest that it represents a cowardly attack that is anxious to wound, but lacks

courage openly to strike. The article is not clever enough to be called subtle, although it may conform to what Mr. Thompson considers subtlety. But it lacks the intellectual quality that subtlety should possess, and which would enable an able writer to disguise his knavery. It is also wanting in the open brutality and unscrupulous lying that characterizes such Fascist papers as *Action* and *The Fascist*, two papers that try hard to reflect credit on their German teachers—or masters.

This may be because the *Standard* professedly caters for a better class of reader than do the papers just named; it may be because the editor and proprietor of the *Standard* is following a common policy of the "yellow press," that of "trying out" a line, in order to see whether it has a circulation "pull" or not. For circulation must be borne in mind, and the advertiser exercise a rare control over many papers. Lord Beaverbrook will certainly not overlook this aspect of the situation.

Lacking the courage openly to vilify a whole people, Mr. Thompson essays the part of a candid friend who is obliged to tell the truth, but who gives a sly kick in the act of bestowing a caress. He hints at grave evils while pretending to praise, and in the name of humanity suggests that Jews do not really deserve the treatment that is, as human beings, their due. He does not deny their right to the Freedom they have in this country, but he suggests they ought not to have it. If Mr. Thompson had greater courage he would be an avowed anti-Semite; if he were more intelligent—well, what is the good of considering the possibility of miracles in 1938?

Mr. Thompson says, "It's felt that we hear too much about the troubles of the Jew. They shout too loudly. They make too insistent a demand upon the compassion of the world."

Mr. Thompson lacks self-control. He should not have allowed his real feelings so to expose themselves. Men are being murdered in Austria and Germany. Jewish girls are being raped (there is plenty of information in newspaper offices and in the hands of the Government of this country), old men are being subjected to brutality and indecent treatment, robbery on a wholesale scale is being practiced, men and women eminent in art, science and philosophy are being imprisoned, driven out of their native country and their property confiscated, the gangsters in charge of Germany proclaim their intention of exterminating over six hundred thousand people, whose chief offence is that they were born, and Mr. Thompson thinks we hear too much about the troubles of the Jew! Can we hear too much about a state of affairs that if presented to the public fully would rouse such indignation that decent men and women would refuse to sit in the same room as a German who was not a refugee? It is not the Jew who is "too insistent" in proclaiming his wrongs to the world, it is the insistence of decent-minded men and women all over the civilized world—irrespective of creed or party—that is crying out for a stop to be put to these horrors. What kind of torture and spoliation of a people is it that would rouse genuine indignation in Mr. Thompson?

But Mr. Thompson is not without feeling; he does not altogether subdue his sense of decency to the newspaper market. He says that the Jew gets "compassion," "but annoyance is apt to accompany it." Annoyance! To whom? Not to Mr. Thompson, surely! He makes a few guineas out of it, and that should be placed to the credit of the Jew—or the Jew-baiter. Does he mean that the Jews are annoying good people, decent people, intelligent people, by calling their attention to the treatment they are receiving? Let Mr. Thompson ask the thousands of people in this country—not Jews—who are actively engaged in try-



ing to mitigate the consequences of the German horror whether they are annoyed by the Jew crying out for help and justice. They would probably tell him that there is nothing new in the lamb bleating when the wolf sets about devouring him.

Deliberate misrepresentation could hardly go farther than when Mr. Thompson, writing, we suspect in trust of the non-acquaintance of his readers with the Dreyfus affair, says:—

A miscarriage of justice to a Jewish officer in the French army becomes a sensation for the whole world. . . . Those who sympathize with Dreyfus may well ask, Would we have heard so much about the case had Dreyfus been a Christian?

A mere miscarriage of justice! That is the way in which Mr. Thompson fobs off on the unwary the vile clerical and militarist plot which sent a perfectly innocent man to a life-long imprisonment to Devil's Island. No wonder Mr. Thompson is annoyed at the Jews objecting to the treatment they are getting at the hands of the German gangsters. And after all it was not the Jews who created the world outcry, but the handful of non-Jewish Frenchmen led by the heroic Zola, that roused the conscience of the world to what Mr. Thompson, *dishonestly* describes as a miscarriage of justice. There is more than one way of telling a lie in the "yellow press," but one may be over-confident in the ignorance of one's readers.

Mr. Thompson has not a very clear sense of distinction between a charge and a compliment. He complains that Jews

are suspected of undermining the traditions and even the stability of the nations that are their hosts. In Britain we see them conspicuous in extreme movements.

Foolishness and Knavery seems to struggle hard for first place here. Jews have belonged to countries such as Germany, Poland, Britain, America, etc., for many generations. They have had children born to them here, they have lived and died here, but in Mr. Thompson's "penny-a-line" judgment they are still visitors in these countries. They do not belong to them. Are we to regard the Royal Family as aliens because about two centuries ago the ancestors of King George came to this country? If not, what are we to do with the Jews who have been in Germany, Poland, and elsewhere for a much longer period? Are we still the hosts of King George? or are we to regard him as an Englishman? Hosts imply visitors, and surely none would call a visitor one who had lived with him in the same household from his birth upward.

Mr. Thompson does not say that "Jews are conspicuous in all extreme movements," that would be a too obvious lie. And in any other sense it is not more true of Jews than of Gentiles. But what Mr. Thompson launches as an indictment is really a compliment. History is dotted all over with "extreme movements" that have become in their turn established institutions. In that way lies progress. I know that "extreme views" are anathema to a certain type of mind, but leaving this on one side does Mr. Thompson think that if there were no Jews there would be no extreme views, that all extreme views come from the Jews? Looking at the beneficial influence on the civilization of the world that is paying the Jew a tremendous compliment, I do not wonder that Hitler and Goering and Mr. Thompson, and others of that type do not care for their Jews. But, it is not true. Extreme, that is new, views come from all sorts of people. Even Mr. Thompson cannot escape the contagion of extreme views; for his article is a standing example of how extreme one may be in the direction of folly and injustice.

The Jew is a citizen of many countries, as is the

Mohammedan, the Roman Catholic, and the Protestant. The Jew is an American, an Italian, an Englishman, as others are members of the country in which they and their forebears have been born. Being a citizen, it is not merely his right, it is his duty to do what he can to alter the institutions of his country if they require altering. But perhaps Mr. Thompson is really objecting to the earnest conscientious Jew who is trying to do his duty to his country by striving to remould institutions in the light of contemporary needs and knowledge, and will gladly tolerate the Jew who is hypocrite and a parasite, who applauds things he does not think are worthy of applause, and tries to keep alive institutions that ought to be destroyed. And Mr. Thompson might bethink himself that in a world where the man of "extreme" views did not exist, where all were passively and unintelligently conservative, there would be no market-value in writing articles such as Mr. Thompson has penned.

Perhaps I have taken more time with Mr. Thompson than he deserves. But he is indicative of one feature of our ill-balanced civilization. He provides an example of that kind of myopic intelligence that can never see things in their proper perspective. It is not, to the properly balanced intelligence, the Jew that is being crucified on the cross of ignorance, rapacity and brutality. And the sight of this crucifixion so annoys Mr. Thompson that he complains—of the crucified! It is not the Jew only who is insistent in his demand for justice and humanity. It is that wider world of right-minded men and women who feel that when wrong is done it is done to *them*, and are outraged by those who suffer injustice. But it would seem that of the existence of this world Mr. Thompson and those of his kind are not aware.

PETER NORTHICOTE.

## The Evils of Compulsory Confession

IN 1215-16 the Lateran Council pronounced in favour of enforced confession in the Roman Catholic Church. It appears that a powerful impetus for this ecclesiastical decision was provided by the prevalence of heresy which the Church was most anxious to detect and, if possible, suppress. That the confessional was extensively utilized for this purpose is notorious. But the dictatorial and unscrupulous statesman Innocent III. who then wore the Papal crown apparently engineered this far-reaching decision with an eye to its future influences in temporal affairs. Yet, even Innocent failed to foresee that the power afforded by the confessional was destined in coming years to greatly exceed the most sanguine expectations of its initiators. And when Aquinas asserted that it was downright heresy to deny that confession is essential to salvation, it was officially accepted as an article of faith.

The clergy and laity alike, were given the most elaborate instructions concerning their newly decided duties. The Lateran Canon commanded the faithful to confess their sins in strict privacy to their ghostly father at least annually, and to undergo the penances prescribed. Also they were to partake of the Communion at Easter. Defaulters were to be refused admission to the Church during life, and to be denied Christian burial after death. This statute, declares the Lateran Canon, must be publicly proclaimed in the churches, so that no one can plead ignorance of its commands. The priest must be prudent and most carefully inquire as to what were the sinner's circumstances, as well as the causes of his failings. This procedure should help the father confessor to find a



remedy. But the priest must strictly avoid any word or hint likely to betray the penitent to others, and it was decreed that "he who shall venture to reveal any sin made known to him in the penitential judgment shall not only be deposed from priestly office, but shall be thrust into a rigid monastery, to perform perpetual penance."

It proved impossible to immediately enforce the Lateran Canon. The then Bishop of Salisbury displayed considerable zeal, but many prelates ignored it. So in 1223 the Council of Rouen ordered its observance, while four years later another Council at Narbonne directed its enforcement on all communicants above the age of 14. The confessional was to assist in detecting heretics who then abounded in Languedoc, and in 1229 the Council of Toulouse instructed the clergy to notify absentees suspected of heresy, and for at least a century later the priests were admonished to pry more closely into the secrets of their flocks.

That the faithful resented coercion is evident in the devious methods adopted to bring them under control. Lists of defaulters were prepared for episcopal inspection. Various forms of evasion were adopted, and some escaped the yearly confession by pretending that they had already confessed to the Mendicant Friars. Yet this was now deemed insufficient as so few recalled a year's sins in a single confession. So the Council of Paris, in 1429, advised the clergy to induce their parishioners to come to confession not only at Easter, but on the other solemn anniversaries—Pentecost, Assumption, All Saints, Christmas and Ash Wednesday.

To promote its popularity the virtues and advantages of confession were extolled to the skies. It was asserted that confession is so potent "that the mere desire to perform it, if the act is prevented by necessity, suffices to remit all sins." Pious frauds were fabricated and spread among the people with the intention of magnifying the confessional's saving grace. William of Paris is cited by Dr. Lea in his *Auricular Confession* as stating "that confession is most sweet to the ears of God and of the heavenly hosts, while it is most horrible and terrifying to the demons, and drives them in dismay from those who piously confess."

The practice of sacerdotal confession led to many evils, for the Church system was entirely inadequate to this onerous task. The rural community was increasing, and the more extensive the area of the parish, the larger the revenues of its incumbent. Quite naturally, therefore, the parish priest resisted any reduction of the parochial boundaries for monetary reasons. Thus, while European States were being burdened and oppressed by an ever-increasing multitude of arrogant and greedy ecclesiastics, the humble parish clergy who were called upon to administer the sacraments became more and more incapable of coping with their recently imposed duties. It is true that the Mendicants stepped in to remedy this, but their intrusion and, above all, the fees they exacted from their penitents aroused a permanent anger and resentment among the parish priests whose incomes the Mendicants diminished.

Again, the clergy as a rule were unfit, both mentally and morally, for their ministrations. When imposing the duties of the confessional, even Innocent III. was fully aware of the shortcomings of the clergy. That he was cognisant of their unworthiness is shown by his admission that they constituted the chief corrupters of the laity. Honorius III., Innocent's successor, urged the same charge against them, while a memorial presented to Innocent IV., in 1250, by the celebrated Bishop Grosseteste, completely sustains the Papal strictures. In Dr. Lea's summary of this one reads that: "The priests are the slayers of souls committed to their charge; they not only flay their

sheep, but strip the flesh from the bones and grind the bones; they are universally given over to fornication and adultery and incest and gluttony." The stern accusations of other outstanding prelates and schoolmen are equally noteworthy.

Aquinas himself deplores the appalling ignorance of the clergy, while Bonaventura's indictment is terrible. He charges nearly all incumbents with shameful neglect of their benefices, which they abandoned to "vicars hired at the lowest possible price, and these were mostly not only ignorant, but so vicious that decent people refuse to confess to them, and an honest woman would risk her reputation if one of them whispered to her; they are vagabonds wandering from cure to cure in search of a living, and when employed always liable to be turned out by an underbidder." When the Mendicants, he continues, denounce the parish priests in their sermons, they do so because clerical offences are so universally known that if passed over in silence the people would naturally conclude that these crimes were not repugnant to God, and women would believe the statements of some priests to the effect that carnal connexion with a cleric involves no sin whatever.

Very seldom was there any supervision of the subordinate confessors. Sometimes attempts were made to lessen the scandal by insisting that no one should confess penitents who was without licence or benefice, but these minor endeavours were few.

The ignorance and depravity of the clergy long continued. St. Catherine of Siena and other reliable witnesses testify to this. Well may Dr. Lea conclude: "That a progressive deterioration, indeed, should occur would seem inevitable when the Holy See, in the fourteenth century, grasped almost the whole disposable patronage of the Church throughout Europe and openly offered it for sale. In this market for spiritualities it is significant to observe that benefices with cure of souls were held at a higher price than those without cure, as though there were a speculative value in the altar and confessional. . . . After forcing confession on the people, the Holy See busied itself in selling the office of confessor to the first comer who would pay its price, and it even turned into a source of profit the infringement of the very slender rules to guard against unsuitness, for it openly sold dispensations as to age: a clerk at twenty-two could buy for sixteen *gros* a letter enabling him to receive priest's orders, while additional years of deficiency were taxed at two *gros* each."

So late as 1538, when Paul III. appointed a commission of cardinals to set the Church in order, it reported that the first requirement was a greatly reformed priesthood, whose misdoings had brought "the Church and its functions into universal contempt." Cardinal Bellarmine also deplored the vices of the clergy, and he laments that the seculars demoralize those they should edify while the regulars shock the faithful with their depravity, and incur the scorn not only of heretics but infidel Turks.

Cæsar of Heisterbach complains of many flagrant evils. Among these he instances the case of a priest who would collect his flock, arrange his penitents in groups of six or eight, and recite a general confession to them, which they repeated after him. A general penance was then imposed, and then they made way for the next batch beckoned to the altar.

The risk of rendering confession repugnant restrained the too curious questioning of the confessors, in some cases at least. But the Jesuits were apt in laying bare the secrets of their penitents by artful insinuation rather than through leading questions.

In the Capuchin Corella's manual, however, which provides a dialogue between the priest and the penitent we find realism rampant, although it is less loath-



some than in other productions of this character. Dr. Lea considers that Corella contains "nothing quite so brutal as Bishop Burchard and the older manuals, but the minuteness of detail which the confessor is represented as requiring of his female penitents is quite as indecent and dangerous, and, as an interchange of speech between man and woman would seem incredible to any but a churchman. The immense success which the work enjoyed throughout Europe during the first half of the eighteenth century, and its translation into various languages show that it was recognized as a safe and practical guide."

The serious risks involved by injudicious interrogatories have long been evident within the Church. Priests who gloated over minute details of salacity, and encouraged their penitents to dwell upon them were by no means rare. Roman writers themselves have condemned the too curious inquiries into carnal sins, and many instances are recorded where previously unsophisticated penitents of both sexes have been introduced to perversions hitherto unknown. One author complains of "the frequency with which mortal sins are committed by the contaminators, who push their indecent inquiries on account of the delectation they experience in such details." This charge was also urged against priestly confessors by Savonarola.

It is said that the confessional is now unstained by the vices of the past. But what occurs is dependent on the discretion of the officiating priest. The seduction of women in the confessional has been a subject of constant anxiety to the Church, and is severely reprobated by the hierarchy. But this abuse was not merely stimulated by the secrecy of confession, but remorse was removed, or at least alleviated, by priestly absolution for this mortal sin. The modern and scholarly Binterim slightly glances at the bestialities of the Penitentials, but is silent concerning the obscenities of medieval and later Catholic writers. He then remarks that: "Past ages present much that modern times have changed. What has passed away belongs to history, not to the present."

Dr. Lea's extensive researches did not enable him to discover until the time of the Counter-Reformation any use of the confessional box in which the priest now sits—a device "with a grille in the side, through which the kneeling penitent can pour the story of his sins into his ghostly father's ear without either seeing the face of the other." Still, what an instrument for evil this coercive system has ever been, and what tremendous power it has placed in the hands of priestcraft.

T. F. PALMER.

## The Churches and Their Rates

At the Annual Conference of the National Secular Society this year, the following resolution was passed:—

This Conference protests against the legal remission of rates and taxes to religious places of worship; it also protests against the practices of local governing bodies enlarging this disguised endowment of religion by its extension to Institutes and other places used for secular purposes, and against the practice of fixing a low assessment to halls owned by religious bodies, and which are let for secular or business purposes; this Conference urges Freethinkers to rouse local opinion on this matter, and suggests that the Society collects and publishes information on the subject.

Mr. Chapman Cohen, the President, urged Freethinkers all over the country to do what they could to collect information on the subject. It will be helpful, therefore, to those Freethinkers who wish to take part in this investigation to have the exact legal position before them.

The Rating and Valuation Act, 1925 (obtainable from any stationer, 1s. 6d.), both incorporated and repealed

many old Acts on this issue, but it left untouched the Poor Rate Exemption Act of 1833, under which churches were enabled to pass their share of local rates to the remainder of the community. This 1833 Act provided that:—

No person or persons shall be rated or shall be liable to be rated, or to pay to any church, or poor rates, or cesses, for or in respect of any churches, district churches, chapels, meeting houses, or premises, or such part thereof as shall be exclusively appropriated to public religious worship, and which (other than churches, district churches, and episcopal chapels of the Established Church) shall be duly certified for the performance of such religious worship according to the provision of any Act or Acts now in force: Provided always, that no person or persons shall be hereby exempted from any such rates or cesses for or in respect of any parts of such churches, district churches, chapels, meeting houses, or other premises, which are not so exclusively appropriated, and from which parts not so exclusively appropriated such person or persons shall receive any rent or rents, or shall derive any profit or advantage.

Provided always that no person or persons shall be liable to any such rates or cesses because the said churches, district churches, chapels, meeting houses, or other premises, or any vestry rooms belonging thereto, or any part thereof, may be used for Sunday or infant schools, or for the charitable education of the poor.

The gist of this is that a building is exempt from rates if,

- (1) it is used exclusively for religious worship.
- (2) it does not belong to the Church of England it must be certified to be used for religious worship.
- (3) it may be used for secular or other purposes if no pecuniary advantage is derived.
- (4) charitable education may be given without infringing the exemption.

Under Section 60 of the Rating and Valuation Act, 1925, the following is provided:—

- (1) Any ratepayer (whether a ratepayer in the rating area to which the documents relate or in some other area) may at all reasonable times . . . inspect and take copies of and extracts from any rate book (whether current or closed), draft list, valuation list, notice of objection, proposal for amendment of the valuation list, notice of appeal, record of totals, valuation made by a valuer appointed by an assessment committee or minutes of the proceedings under this Act of any such committee or of a rating authority.

The penalty provided for by this Act for any person obstructing this provision is a fine not exceeding five pounds.

Sub-section (4) of Section 60 of this same Act provides that:—

For the purposes of this section the expression "ratepayer" includes an occupier who pays a rent inclusive of rates and also includes any person authorized by a ratepayer to act on his behalf under this section.

Freethinkers in all parts of the country, therefore, have the right to inspect the valuation lists of rating authorities, and to make notes of any entry.

In one part of the country it has been found that the exemption which is unfair in itself and is a disguised endowment of religion has been extended from buildings used for religious worship to buildings owned by religious sects. So that now there are church halls and institutes and similar buildings which are used for purely secular or business purposes which carry an exemption from rates which is quite an illegal exemption.

Freethinkers therefore may strike a blow at a very vulnerable part of religion—its purse—by examining the rating records of their district and insisting upon a proper assessment being placed upon all buildings which cannot legally secure exemption from rates.

JACK WALTON.

The idea of a future life is supported by not a single fact, while there is much evidence against it.

Metchnikoff.



## Empire Sunday

A FEW weeks ago I saw notices all over Hastings Town to the effect that there would be a Grand Military Rally at the Hastings Speedway, given by the Royal Corps of Signals, on Sunday, May 22.

We were told that Dispatch Riders, Display Troops, Military Bands and (to make the people forget it was all a preparation for war), humorous items would be included in the programme.

On the same day, also in Hastings, on the top of a hill—a spot commanding a glorious sea view, and affording the opportunity of wonderful fresh air—I noticed that the swings and see-saws, put up for the amusement of little children, were locked up because it was the Sabbath.

In many parts of England to-day the childrens' playgrounds are locked up on Sundays, and the Church, practically silent on the subject of the burning injustices everywhere around them, is ever ready to interfere with the legitimate aspirations and liberty of men and women, even to the spending of a rational Sunday. A group of people who deliberately prevent and interfere with the delights of children cannot be classed simply as "puritans," but must be called "cads." And yet Freethinkers are told that when they attack Christianity, and all it stands for, including its poisonous restrictions, they are "out of date."

When one reads that, despite all their opposition, Sunday has become more and more a day of rational enjoyment to millions, how many of us ever think of the part the Freethinkers have played in helping to change that hellish day of gloom into a day of rest and pleasure?

Some Christians will freely admit this and say: "Oh yes, of course you are dealing altogether with the past: that is the trouble with all you Freethinkers." But to-day the Church blocks up the gangway to human progress.

There was also a procession of the British Legion and of the Fire Brigades, with several bands in attendance at the Grand Military Rally, and, of course, the Church could not miss a chance like this—so their white-surpliced parsons were strongly in evidence handing round slips on which were printed "suitable hymns" (how sick one gets of these "suitable hymns!")

The proceedings were to end with the singing of "Land of Hope and Glory"—this, of course, means *our* land, not other people's, and included in this jargon are the lines:—

"God who made thee mighty  
Make thee mightier yet."

Sir William Joynson Hicks once said that the British Empire was won by the sword and would be held by the sword. I suppose this is quite logical—God was behind the sword. The British Bible and the British bullet have often travelled the same road, and have both very often found a lodgement in the hearts of the people attacked. They received the two messages simultaneously—first they got the bullet; then those who were spared received the Bible, while we got the land.

As the old Maori chief said to the missionary: "When you came to New Zealand, you had the Bible and we had the land; now you have the land and we have the Bible."

Still I suppose the missionaries probably regard it as a fair exchange; for we have been told hundreds of times that the Bible is the source of England's greatness.

F. A. HORNIBROOK.

Down at York the Church Education Society has been addressed by the Archbishop. His Grace said he was satisfied with the prospects of religion in our public education, which is a great deal more than the clergy as a body seem to be. He also twitted the other side with having no ethical manual, while "the voluntaryists had a moral treatise in the Bible." Yes a moral treatise so pure and perfect that scores of passages cannot be read before a mixed audience, and hundreds of passages cannot be read out to children; a moral treatise so pure and perfect that a famous publishing firm has pruned away its most offensive parts and issued the rest as a Child's Bible.

## Obituary

MARY ANN BELL.

THE sympathy of all our readers will go out to Mr. Robert Bell, of Stanley, Co. Durham, on the loss of his wife, Mary Ann Bell, at the age of 75. Mrs. Bell died on the eve of the fiftieth anniversary of her wedding, a half-century of perfect happiness for both Mr. and Mrs. Bell. Words are but feeble things on such occasions, but if the sympathy of all who know him is of avail—there are no children—then the bereaved husband will have it without measure.

Mr. and Mrs. Bell had been associated with the Free-thought movement as brave, loyal and general supporters for more than fifty years. We first knew Mr. Bell in those far-off days of our early visits to Tyneside. He was always ready to do what he could to help, and as modest in his claims as he was generous in his service. So far as an individual could help a great movement, he helped North-country Freethought and benefited many who were unaware of the help given them. Unfortunately Mr. Bell is himself in poor health, but our thoughts will go out to him in his loneliness. He has earned all that can be said in praise of his character and his work, and there is no doubt that in this he owed much to the devotion of the partner whose loss he is suffering.

Freethought owes much to the women who have worked, fought and suffered for it, and among these must be placed high the name of Mary Ann Bell.—C.C.

## 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, Moritz J. Bonn, D.Sc.—"War and Economics."

#### OUTDOOR

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

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place): 7.30, Mr. J. W. Barker—A Lecture.

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, Mrs. E. Groult. Rushcroft Road, Brixton. 8.0, Tuesday, Miss E. Millard. Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town, 8.0, Friday, Mr. F. A. Ridley.

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.

WEST HAM BRANCH (Corner of Deanery Road, Water Lane, Stratford, 7.): 7.0, Mr. L. Ebury—A Lecture.

### COUNTRY

#### OUTDOOR

BERKENHEAD (The Haymarket): 8.30, Saturday, Debate—"Is the Bible True?" Affir.: Rev. Percival Després and Mr. Arthur D. Cummings. Neg.: Mr. J. V. Shortt.

BLACKBURN (Market): 8.0, Monday, Mr. J. V. Shortt—"Universal Evolution."

BLYTH (The Fountain): 7.0, Monday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

BURNLEY MARKET: 7.0, Sunday, Mr. J. Clayton.

CHESTER-LE-STREET (Bridge End): 8.0, Friday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

EDINBURGH N.S.S. (Mound): 7.0, Mr. F. Smithies—A Lecture.

(Continued on page 447)



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(Continued from page 446)

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

GREENOCK BRANCH N.S.S. (Grey Place): 8.0, Wednesday, M. I. Whitefield. Literature on sale.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Corner of High Park Street and Park Road): 8.0, Thursday, Mr. Robinson. Queen's Drive, opposite Walton Baths, 8.0, Sunday, Mr. Robinson or Mr. Parry and Mrs. Thompson.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Eccles Market): 8.0, Friday, Alexander Park Gates, 8.30, Saturday, Stevenson Square, 7.30, Sunday, Wigan Market, 8.0, Monday, Chorley Market, 8.0, Tuesday, Mr. W. A. Atkinson will speak at each meeting.

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

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

QUAKER BRIDGE: 3.0, Sunday, Mr. J. Clayton.

SABDEN: 7.0, Monday, Mr. J. Clayton.

STOCKTON-ON-TEES (The Cross): 7.0, Sunday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SWANSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (The Sands): 7.30, Mr. G. Whitehead will lecture every evening until July 16.

POULDRIDGE: 7.45, Friday, Mr. J. Clayton.

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