

THE FREETHINKER

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Views and Opinions

Are We Christian?

I HAVE often wondered how many of those who have lost faith in Christian doctrines have also given up belief in the Christian standard of moral values? My experience is that very few who have achieved the first stage of liberation have advanced to the second. By the Christian standard of moral values I do not mean belief in those elementary moral values that obtain all over the world, and which are very impudently called "Christian." So far as mere moral values are concerned every group of human beings, whether civilized or uncivilized, display a sense of the value of truthfulness, kindness, honesty, loyalty to the tribe, affection for their parents, etc., etc. The reason for this is that these fundamental qualities represent the conditions that make human society possible. They do not so much arise out of group life as they are the foundations of group life. In an immature form they may be seen active in the animal world. It is only the impudence of Christian preachers that leads to the labelling of these qualities as Christian, and only the ignorance of average humanity can lead to their acceptance as such. Nansen said that among the primitive Esquimaux kindness to children is everywhere prominent. Among nomadic peoples generally hospitality is universal; with many primitive tribes lying is the most detested of practices. One might continue these examples indefinitely. Perhaps it is that as society advances and becomes more stable it can afford to be a little more careless about the practice of these fundamental qualities of associated life. With more primitive folk their neglect on such a scale as is often the case with "advanced" people would spell ruin.

What I have really in mind when I put the question "How far have the majority of professed disbelievers in Christianity outgrown the religious values of life, and particularly the Christian values?" is to what extent are a great many so-called unbelievers still dominated by a conception of intellectual and

moral values (values, be it noted, not qualities) that are fundamentally religious in nature? What I do find is that when I analyse what a great many avowed Freethinkers have said, and still say, when I examine carefully their attitude towards a purely religious view of life, I find that unconsciously they are actually measuring life in terms of the religious standards they believe themselves to have outgrown. As I have so often said, there are thousands of Atheists who are still carrying round with them the ghost of a god. The hundred per cent Atheist is still, comparatively, very scarce. Professed disbelievers in Christianity, particularly when they happen to be highly placed, remind me of the professed teetotaller who, when he was found drunk, explained that, whilst he was a teetotaller, he was not a bigoted one. There are times when toleration can be carried too far.

* * *

Religion and Morals

One preliminary must be laid down. It is a sign of advance when a religion such as Christianity begins to express its theology in terms of moral value. It is then, of course, trading under false pretences, and if monetary credit were obtained in the way that 90 per cent of Christian teachers obtain social credit to-day, their reward would be prison for a breach of the criminal law. Religion, as such, and Christianity, as such, do not begin with a primary interest in ethics. It is only as society advances that religions are compelled to pay attention to those social and moral values that simply cannot be ignored. And the more active the social consciousness becomes, the more marked becomes the desire of the priest to commend himself in terms of his assumed ethical value. No one who has any knowledge of a social evolution, and the evolution of religion, will seriously dispute what I have said.

The first example of what I have in mind will be, so far as Freethinkers are concerned, readily admitted. Probably they will not so readily admit that they have often, and do often, deserve the same condemnation. When the late Hall Caine died he left a life of Jesus Christ that ran to three million words. His two sons very wisely cut this three million words down to six hundred thousand. Then they, very unwisely, published it. Perhaps some one with more considerate judgment will cut the 1270 pages down to a tract—that is if they have an intelligent respect for the memory of Hall Caine. For it is nothing, really, that Hall Caine did not believe that Jesus was born of a virgin, or that he rose from the dead, or that he fed five thousand people with a handful of fishes, or that he turned water into wine. I say that is nothing, for a grown up man or woman has actually no more right to feel proud of not believing in these things than he or she has for not believing in the historical reality of Old Mother Hubbard. They ought to feel sad that

their education was such as to induce belief in absurdities that ought not to impose upon children of ten years of age. A man may be excused feeling pleased that he is not so great a fool as he was, but there is no need to drag the evidence for it before the general public.

Now Hall Caine has left it on record that he read the New Testament right through many times, read "very carefully," and then came to the conclusion that the books of the New Testament, "as they have come down to us were not written by God." Stupendous! The critical ability shown in such a conclusion, to say nothing of its unique character, perhaps warranted writing three million words to instruct the world. But I think from what one knows of the history of the Christian religion, that if Hall Caine had read through the New Testament often enough, and if he had carefully avoided reading anything else, he might have developed a quite strong conviction of the divine inspiration of the New Testament.

It may, of course, lead me to wonder just how Hall Caine came to be so sure that the New Testament was not written by God. One may form an opinion as to whether Shakespeare wrote *Coriolanus*, by comparing the play with other writings of Shakespeare. But how does anyone decide that a book was or was not written by God? Where are the other writings of God with which Hall Caine compared the New Testament? Even then God may have different styles of writing, and may write at one time like God, and at another time like Hall Caine or "Jimmy" Douglas. How do gods write? Would Mr. Caine have recognized a manuscript of God had he actually come across one? Hall Caine may have reasoned that if God had written the New Testament it would have been better written, and would have contained fewer absurdities. Maybe; but, after all, God does not appear to have been a prolific author, anyway, and no writer exhibits a first-rate style at once. Mr. Hall Caine appears to have based his conviction that God did not write the New Testament on the fact that it is full of improbabilities and crudities. But, again, one must remember that man is made in the image of God, and perhaps it is that he reflects God in his writing as well as in other directions. I make these suggestions timidly because, after all, I really do not know how gods write, and it may be that all Hall Caine really meant was that if he had been God he would have avoided some of the absurdities that appear in the New Testament. That may be sound enough reasoning, but it ought to be remembered that God wrote—if he did write the New Testament—a long while ago, while Hall Caine had the privilege of living at a much later date. And there is no reason for believing that if Hall Caine had written the New Testament say, two thousand years ago, it would have been intellectually better than the present one.

Seriously, the only reason why Hall Caine decided that the New Testament was not written by God was that he had been brought up in the belief, (1) that God existed and (2) that anything God did would be free from flaw. Hall Caine had got rid of part of the Christian superstition but not of all of it. He was looking for a perfection in the New Testament that was not to be found in other writings. He represented the common case of early thought forms persisting after their contents had almost disappeared, and which caused him to indulge in forms of folly which he honestly believed he had outgrown.

* * *

Our Tailed Minds

There are many other illustrations of this. For example, it is common to find people who say they cannot believe in a God because nature is full of cruelty

and injustice. But the question of whether God exists and the existence of cruelty in nature are quite distinct things. Existence is not the equivalent of goodness; nor did belief in gods begin in the conviction that they were good. Man believed they existed, but they were as likely to be bad as good, for both qualities have always been prominent in human affairs. Gods had existed for a very long time before they were thought of as being necessarily good, and even then there were certain groups of gods who were known as devils. But the gods became moral only when man took them in hand and made them fit to move in decent society. Man makes his gods first and moralizes them afterwards. It is through the influence of the moralization of life that the gods grow better. Man makes gods in his own image morally as well as in other directions.

Here is one other example, simple in form, and yet a clear case of avowed Freethinkers who have not quite outgrown the teachings that were early forced on them. Very early in my outdoor lecturing experiences I had some very rough meetings. There were not merely interruptions, but actual physical contests. I never sought these rows, but I never went out of my way to avoid them. In truth I confess I rather enjoyed them. One of these days I may write a fuller account of my experiences—when I have nothing else to do. But more than once when the platform on which I had been lecturing had been reduced to splinters, and there had been quite a nice distribution of bruises—I am glad to say not all on the Freethought side—I have heard an infuriated Freethinker ask aloud of a crowd of Christians, "Where's your Christianity?" Well, there it was in front of him, represented by a broken platform and an unnumbered assembly of cuts and bruises. Christianity was there in its most active form, and in one of the commonest of its historic shapes.

Now why should a Freethinker ask a question like that? He must have known that Christians had always, when possible, met criticism with force, and that the display that had just been witnessed was an angel's caress compared with what Christianity had displayed when in its prime. The same Freethinker would talk easily about Bruno at the stake, Galileo in his prison, the fires of Smithfield or the massacres of St. Bartholomew. Yet he asked, after a mere scuffle, "Where's your Christianity?"

Again the explanation lies in the persistence of early impressions. Freethinkers had been brought up, in this country, in an environment in which Christianity was a very powerful factor. They had been told that Christianity was a religion of love and brotherhood, without being told that the brotherhood was no more than the membership of a sect, and that Christian love meant usually no more than the reverse side of hatred and intolerance. The Freethinker had outgrown the formal beliefs impressed upon him in his early years, but their influence was still there in that dim region of the unconscious that lies below the level of consciousness. He was still thinking of Christianity, not in terms of intelligently appreciated facts, but in terms of discarded religious hypotheses, the influence of which was still with him.

Next week I will give further illustrations of the truth of what has been said.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Convinced that there is no eternal life awaiting him, he [man] will strive all the more to brighten his life on earth and rationally improve his condition in harmony with that of his fellows.—Ernst Haeckel.

The Courage of Carlile

"Spirits are not finely touched
But to fine issues."—*Shakespeare.*

"The old guard dies, but never surrenders." The famous saying leaps to the memory at the mention of the name of the lion-hearted Richard Carlile. The story of his struggles is a part of the history of Freethought, and it is a tale of a hero fighting at fearful odds against overwhelming foes. Carlile's was the true soldier's temperament, supported by the unshakable principles, without which no great purpose can be achieved. No misfortune disconcerted him; no defeat cowed his proud spirit. He could not be bullied or frightened, although Freethought was then fighting for its very existence. Superstition, very effectively disguised in the ermine of the judge, was strong in the land, and very contemptuous of the little band of heroes and heroines, whose evangel has revolutionized knowledge, and rewritten the intellectual history of the world. In the darkest days of the Freethought Movement, Carlile and his colleagues never lost courage, for they knew the longer they lay in prison the greater the triumph won for the cause they had at heart.

Think of it! Carlile himself suffered nine and a half years' imprisonment for championing free speech. His brave wife and other members of his family, and shop assistants divided among them fifty years' confinement in gaols. And what a man was the leader, that vital, dynamic personality, all aglow with fiery enthusiasm, who diffused energy all about him, and whose presence caused stimulation.

A son of the West Country, born in 1790, Richard Carlile was self-educated. As a boy, he collected fagots to burn in effigy "Tom Paine," the Guy Fawkes of that time, whose virile writings were in after life to influence him so greatly. For he was twenty-five years old before he read Paine, whose books roused Carlile like a trumpet-blast. Henceforth he was the dauntless champion of Freethought and free speech. Taxes were then placed on knowledge, and fine and imprisonment faced all who dared to speak or write of religious or political liberty. England was then ruled by a crazy king, a profligate regent, and a corrupt government, but Carlile, a poor man, defied the Cerberus of Authority, and broke the fetters of press despotism. For, remember, the newspaper press to him was not as it is too largely to-day, a mere purveyor of sensation, dirt, and scandal. It was to him a vehicle of ideas, a platform from which the evangel of Liberty could be proclaimed, a trumpet whose clarion-notes would summon men and women to the unending battle against wrong and tyranny.

Alive in every fibre, Carlile was the very man to carry a forlorn hope to victory. Handcuffed and imprisoned, he roused the public conscience, and actually compelled the all-powerful authorities to cry "halt." It was impossible to suppress him; it was but punching a pillow. When a score of his assistants had been sent to prison for selling Freethought literature, the prosecuted books were sold through an aperture so that the buyer could not identify the seller. Afterwards the volumes were sold by a slot machine, probably the first of its kind. Among the books on sale were Paine's *Age of Reason*, and *Rights of Man*; Annet's *Life of David*; Voltaire's works; Palmer's *Principles of Nature*, and many others. When his stock-in-trade was seized by the authorities, Carlile read nearly the whole of Paine's *Age of Reason* in his speech for the defence, so that additional publicity should be given to the matter sought to be suppressed. Nor was imprisonment the only punishment inflicted,

for fines amounting to thousands of pounds were imposed; and every effort was made to destroy his business. To annoy his persecutors, Carlile dated his letters from prison "the era of the carpenter's wife's son." What a gesture of defiance!

Superior folk may lift their eyebrows at such audacity in a poor man, but the fiery, restless courage which accounted for it is a quality which the world can very ill spare. What it can achieve needs no record; it is written on history's page in a life and actions as courageous as any to be read in the immortal pages of Plutarch. Fighting the embattled hosts of superstition, the victory remained to Carlile and his colleagues. Writing from gaol in the sixth year of his imprisonment, he was able to say, "All the publications that have been prosecuted have been, and are, continued in open sale." What matchless courage! "The sound of it is like the ring of Roman swords on the helmets of Barbarians." Small wonder that the two greatest poets of his time, Keats and Shelley, recognized that this man was a hero battling for intellectual liberty.

Carlile's victory over the Barbarians was so complete that his later years were spent in comparative peace at Enfield, where he died in 1843. True to the very end in his devotion to science and humanity, he bequeathed his body to Dr. Lawrence for the purpose of dissection and the advancement of knowledge. His funeral at Kensal Green Cemetery was the occasion of an exhibition of clerical spite. At the interment a parson named Twigger appeared and insisted on reading the burial service. "Sir," said the eldest son, Richard, "we want no service over our father's body; he lived in opposition to priestcraft, and we protest against the service being read." The parson persisted, and the last insult of the Church was hurled at the dead hero. Carlile's brave wife survived him only a few months, and she was buried in the same grave. Thus ended the career of one who, as Browning has it, was "ever a fighter," strenuous, eager, but who also had the imperishable excellence of strength and sincerity.

Such a fight and such heroism could scarcely occur without definite results. Twenty-three years after Carlile's death organized Freethought had become an accomplished fact. For it was in 1866 that the National Secular Society was founded, the first president being the able and courageous, Charles Bradlaugh, a man of similar bravery to Carlile. So true is it:—

"The greatest gift the hero leaves his race
Is to have been a hero. Say, we fail?
We feed the high tradition of this world,
And leave our spirits in our children's breasts."

MIMNERMUS.

The Nazis got Me

Two words, spoken carelessly in private to one I thought was a sympathetic friend, doomed me to seven months of Nazi terror. They cost me my nerve, 40 pounds in weight, and the right ever again to set foot in my native land.

While visiting my wife's sister in Coblenz, I met an elderly woman who clicked her tongue sympathetically when she heard that my wife and I planned to begin life over again in America. I had made good money as a radio singer, but recently the Goebels propaganda office had refused me an actor's permit—one of my grandparents was so lacking in foresight 75 years ago as to marry a Jew.

"It's too bad," sighed my sister-in-law's caller,

"that you lost your job. You sang nicely—nothing but good German songs." She glanced at the wall, then pointed with a half-smile to a photograph of Hitler with Julius Streicher, Germany's most fanatical Jew-baiter.

"That actor!" I exclaimed bitterly. That was all.

Six days later and 400 miles away, in our home in Munich, my wife and I were awakened very early in the morning by insistent pounding on the door. I opened it, and there stood two plain-clothes men.

"Get dressed and come with us," they barked.

"Why?"

"None of your business!"

I tried to reassure my wife, telling her I'd be back in an hour or so. But that's the last I saw of her for seven months. At headquarters I discovered that the old woman who seemed so sorry for me was what we called a "200 per cent Nazi." She had felt it her duty to tell the secret political police about my sneering remark.

During the next ten days I saw the cheerless inside of four of Munich's swarming jails, prisons where cells meant for seven held 20. One day I voiced to my cellmates the question that was constantly in my mind: when would I be brought to trial?

"Trial!" repeated one man who looked like a ghost, "I've been here two years waiting for trial. I was unemployed for a year until I was enrolled in a labour battalion. Then they said they found a Communist newspaper in my kit and sent me here. But I never saw that paper. I never had it, I tell you! Two years here without trial—"

We had to sit on him. He was making too much noise.

Another prisoner wore the black breeches of the *Schutzstaffel*, the most Nazi of Nazi units. He had been a guard at Dachau, the dread concentration camp outside Munich. Those who were released from there were broken men with terror in their eyes, pledged on pain of further imprisonment not to tell their experiences. The boy in the black breeches was in the Munich jail for two years because he gave two cigarettes to a Dachau prisoner.

On the eleventh day guards herded a dozen of us into a windowless omnibus. Where were we going? Perhaps to trial? Each prisoner was locked in a tiny cell barely large enough in which to sit. Slits in the side gave ventilation and a chance to peep out. About an hour from the city I saw a roadside sign flash by. Dachau!

The camp is surrounded by a high wall, studded with machine-gun towers. Within the wall is a heavy wire fence charged with high-voltage electricity. Behind that are two wooden fences, the space between them being so-called neutral ground; to be seen there means death by a stream of machine-gun bullets.

I was assigned to a company of the most dismal, unhappy men I had ever seen. They had been lawyers, doctors, former officials—men of education and among Germany's best. Now, depressed and silent, without hope, they were walking dead men without souls.

"How long have you been here?" I asked one of them. The man looked at me with expressionless eyes and turned away. I spoke to another. Again the expressionless eyes and he, too, turned away without a word.

A third brushing by me muttered, "Watch yourself, boy! Talking now means trouble and plenty of it. I'll see you later."

The man who warned me not to talk was assigned to show me how to arrange my bedding and locker.

"Do everything exactly as you're told," he advised. "If you don't, they'll put you in the dark-room—solitary confinement; bread and water, in a room with no light, no heat and a guard with a big whip."

Our day began at five a.m. Breakfast consisted of one cup of "coffee" and a little black bread. At 5.30 came roll call and assignment of the day's work. Invariably one of the three Jewish companies was detailed to clean the camp latrines. A prisoner whose work did not please a guard might be kicked into one of the open privies. Strange things, those Aryan laws; my one Jewish grandparent prevented me from earning my living in Germany as an Aryan, but, having only one quarter Jewish blood, I did not have to clean camp latrines.

At noon we returned to camp for lunch. Watery vegetable stew and black bread. We heard that meat was in the stew. I never saw any.

Half an hour later came inspection. The slightest disarray usually meant a day or two in the "dark-room."

That was our universal fear. Men who came back from it did not talk, but upon their bare backs I saw welts caused by learning National Socialism from a whip. Ignorance of what happened there gave solitary confinement an even greater dread.

At four we were back in the barracks for supper: black bread and vegetable stew. At five came a free hour out of doors, followed by another inside. For two hours a day we could talk. But conversation was cautious. Weeks passed before occupants of neighbouring bunks and I had sufficient mutual confidence to speak freely. We rarely knew the full names of our fellow prisoners. It was not healthy to know them, or too much about anything that went on at Dachau. Men who seemed to know much were taken away—where or for what we never learned. Spirits crushed, living in constant dread, preyed upon by unknown fears, we hadn't much desire to talk.

The unknown preyed upon my morale as it did upon the others'. Here were 3,000 men, possessing some of the best independent minds in Germany. Everything that might occupy those minds was calculat-ingly withheld. We were treated like dumb, driven cattle; and to be broken to dumb, driven cattle's spirit and reactions was what we were there for. Dachau meant mental death. What ambition we had left was fixed upon one object: to be on our best behaviour in the hope of being released earlier.

And so, at seven, to bed. Ten hours in bed may sound like luxury. In reality they were torture for most of us couldn't sleep. Night after night we lay in the dark thinking, whispering our hopes and fears to each other. The wildest rumours swept through the barracks. Goering had committed suicide; Hitler was assassinated and we would be set at liberty next Saturday!

Some tortured souls managed to die by their own hands. One prisoner on kitchen detail secreted a piece of tin, slashed his wrists and bled quietly and happily to death in his bunk. Others knotted a few rags together, went out to the latrines and hung themselves in the dark.

Thus six months dragged by, day slowly following day with the same brutal routine, until the time when I was led from the barracks to the windowless omnibus that had brought me from Munich. I was given neither reason nor destination, and still no word about a trial. Finally a train took me to Coblenz where, after a month of solitary confinement, I was taken into court.

My grievous crime against the German people was unfolded before three judges by the State's Attorney

and confirmed by the old woman who called upon my sister-in-law that afternoon ages before. One of the courtroom doors was ajar, and there stood my wife! They wouldn't let her come in, but during the 45 minutes my lawyer addressed the court we looked at each other, she tense and drawn and I a mental wreck of 95 pounds.

Reprinted from "The Reader's Digest,"

"Neurasthenic Frenzy"

Mr. MAURICE COLLIS, writing in *Time and Tide*, takes as his text, J. W. Dunne's queer books. It is difficult to know whether Mr. Collis accepts Dunne's theories, but he says "the author demonstrates in a popular manner the thesis that personal immortality is an irrefutable fact." This "testimonial" probably means no more than that the advertisers speak well of their wares.

Personal immortality, says Mr. Collis, "was declared to be a superstition three generations ago, in terms which no one could rebut by reason." It may be that Mr. Collis is an "agnostic" even now after reading his "irrefutable" reasoner, but we should prefer a greater authority than he claims to be before accepting his *ipse dixit* for the idea that Mr. Dunne's extraordinary "fabric of a dream" "represents the latest scientific view."

Whatever agnosticism Mr. Collis may entertain on Mr. Dunne's ideas as a whole, both the writers agree that

the gradual abandonment over fifty years ago of belief in personal immortality took the form of a neurasthenic frenzy to destroy the world.

Apparently these bad men ought to have waited "over fifty years" longer—but they abandoned an unproved theory in order to destroy what they believed to be the only human existence. This conclusion is about as silly as any other form of the ancient calumny that unbelief in the claims of priests and their inspired revelations about God and human origins necessarily carries with it complete indifference—or worse—to human morality and welfare.

Sir James Frazer and other investigators show that credulous, ignorant, superstitious primitive men FEARED the gods most literally. They dreaded the wrath of deities they believed in. Thunderbolts, bad harvests and ill-luck all round might follow the infidelity of a single member of the tribe.

Bible stories provide numerous instances of the ghastliest crimes (called "punishments") inflicted on those whose actions were imagined likely to "provoke God to anger." The oblong chest called the "Ark" (treated only with derision by all students), said to contain a "pot of manna" "Aaron's rod which budded," and odds and ends of phallic worship, was mounted on a cart and drawn by oxen. On one of its many journeys Uzzah was "struck dead" by God for the impiety of saving the ark from falling out of the cart (2 Sam. vi 6). The Philistines who captured the ark in battle suffered terribly for this shocking wickedness (not of slaughter, but of blasphemy).

The whole history of "taboo" is based on a belief—once universal—that this "Vengeance of the Gods" was as inevitable as it was dreaded. This belief impelled priests and rulers to torture, execution, and segregation (the ancient equivalent of "concentration camps") of those whose forms, faces, or infidelity to tribal beliefs offended the gods, and thus rendered the whole tribe liable to divine "judgment." Taboo, says Frazer, meant that the offenders were dangerous men, and that "the danger in which they stand and to which they expose others is what we should call spiritual or ghostly," i.e., religious.

Mr. Collis says the corollary of Mr. Dunne's ideas is that

as soon as men realize that personal immortality is after all a fact, the tension in their minds will relax, and with that relaxation will go their inclination to destroy each other.

If this means anything at all, it implies that in Mr. Collis's (or Mr. Dunne's) reading of history, all wars and all crimes of violence have been perpetrated by Atheists. Without the benefit of Mr. Dunne's "demonstrations," the religious wars of history—including the Crusades—were wrought by men who never doubted the absolute truth of the theory of personal immortality. Worse still—for Mr. Dunne's fatuous claims—Christian warriors had active "inclinations to destroy" Moslem and Jewish and Heathen "personalities" which would actually have "immortal lives" of fiendish hellish suffering.

The most modern of our Priests have said exactly the same things in favour of war which the tribal medicine-men taught—and with the same beliefs. It was the present Bishop of London who said in 1914, "Kill Germans—the good as well as the bad—kill those who have shown kindness to our wounded." It was not an unbeliever, but the highly esteemed believer, Cromwell, who said, "By God's grace we killed five thousand yesterday."

Our criminal statistics do not support Dunne's demonstrations. Atheist murderers are as rare as other Atheist jail-birds. Is it to be credited that if the Freethinkers of the world "realized that personal immortality is a fact," they would become good moral people like the Bishop of London and the anti-Freethinkers who polluted Bradlaugh's grave?

Mr. Collis says he agreed with Dunne that

the rehabilitation of personal immortality implies the rehabilitation of God . . . and so allows for ethics more than an epicurean sanction. . . . It has been recognized by thinker after thinker . . . that the evils from which the world is suffering . . . can be traced to one cause and to one cause only, the extinction of belief in the reality of the spiritual.

The "rehabilitation of God" is going to be a very "tough job." Does the phrase imply that we shall sink again to the level of approving the crimes, obscenities, insanities, favouritisms, and magic with which God is associated in Bibles and Creeds? Or does Mr. Collis mean by "rehabilitation" REPUDIATION of all these attributes of God? We imagine no ethical creed of any decent human being can "rehabilitate" the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Torquemada, and others who bear so terrible a burden of offence against human standards of ethics.

The innuendo that materialism possesses only "an epicurean sanction for ethics" is characteristic of theistic arguments. The noble Epicurus was one of the first philosophers to recognize the social origin of morality. To sneer at Epicureanism is just a trick of words. An Epicurean is defined in modern dictionaries as "one devoted to sensual enjoyments, especially one who indulges in the luxuries of the table" (Annandale). Shelley, Mill, Marx, Bradlaugh, Zola and the Curies fit ill into a category whose distinctive type has usually been a gluttonous Cardinal, a fatally opulent Bishop or a wealthy idler of unimpeachable orthodoxy.

It is amusing to read the conclusion of Mr. Collis's review. He refers to the Hitler-Chamberlain interview and to the relief some people felt because England was saved from immediate war:—

As a result of those days of anguish they themselves had seen as a fact, as clearly as if a Messiah had told them, what Lord Baldwin . . . called the Finger of God, tracing a rainbow as a sign of His covenant with man.

God and His Finger were absentees as far as the reports tell us. If any Messiah is responsible for the present state of Europe—especially European ethics—it is time humanity is given a chance to change it all. Instead of mooning about Gods, and their precious "fingers," or God's rainbow (or was it God's Swastika?), or the mystical methods for prolonging life after death, we should like to see some appreciation of the "hand" of science. It has saved myriads of mankind from premature death, has prolonged the average expectation of life, and offers material proofs of the value of human thought, human good-will, and human co-operation.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

Acid Drops

The enquiry being carried out by the British Institute of Public Opinion, discloses the fact that 47 per cent of the people from whom enquiries were made go in for football pools. There are about ten per cent of the people who go to church. Football pools have an easy first, and by all the tests laid down by politicians and "big circulation" newspapers the national intelligence is heavily on the side of the football pools.

Of course, the vast majority of religious leaders are heavily against football pools, so are those very exalted ladies and gentlemen who, apart from religion, do not like to think that people pay too much attention to being comfortable. They have not yet let go enough of their old religious feeling not to feel that there is a danger about too much happiness, and that a long face has more to commend it than a continuously happy one. And many of the dignified brought two charges against football pools. One is that too large a portion of the money is retained by those who run the pools. Which means that speculating in pools would be all right if the subscribers got enough out of it. That, we admit, is fundamental Christianity, for the essence of Christian moral teaching is that without the certainty of drawing an external reward or of being punished if one fails to get one, there is really no sense in human decency or good behaviour.

The second plea is that it is wrong for the working man to spend sixpence or a shilling on filling up coupons. That is, of course, a very serious consideration. Consider that in this way a man spends two pounds twelve yearly—assuming football went on right through the year. Why in a hundred years he might have saved enough to take himself and family for a tour round the world. And throughout the whole of that time he would have had all the pleasures of anticipation. We are not surprised that these eminent clergymen are disgusted with working men risking so much in the hope of getting a prize. Now if they had put the shilling a week into the collection plates in church, that would have been a worthy investment, for there is a sure prize for every person—in the next world.

On the whole the past few weeks have been quite a "crazy" period of which a music hall might well be envious. We had loud assurances that we had every arrangement for national protection in the case of war, and Ministers were pictured with their noses at the muzzles of big guns, or sitting in air-test tunnels to prove that everything was up to date. Then we had these same Ministers falling over each other to prove that so far as air-raid protection was concerned, we had nothing ready and everything was in so hopeless a muddle that an ordinary foreman of works would have been sacked forthwith. But their having bungled so badly provides irresistible grounds for keeping Ministers in office, because others might bungle in another fashion. This bungling and unpreparedness is also a further justification for Mr. Chamberlain giving Hitler more than he had asked for—so far as other people's possessions were concerned. The lusty lying of Nazi leaders has also provided our Prime Minister with the only evidence he has for the truthfulness of the German Government. On the one side, our Prime Minister is well-assured that Germany wishes for peace, while the German leaders continue to assure the world that they have got what they have because they were strong enough to take it, and it was this threat of applied force that did the trick. Finally this country enters on a new era of peace—"appeasement" is the new word—by making frantic preparations for knocking the — out of —! We cannot say whom because as we have the Government's assurance that Mussolini wishes for peace with us, and Hitler says he has no desire and no intention for conflict with England, it may be that we are arming against Monaco, or perhaps the Irish Free State. If there was ever a crazy month we are having one.

A sort of a tail to this crazy month is that the British Government has full faith in the word of Mussolini, when he says he has no designs on Spain, while Lord Halifax, who trusts Mussolini and has the highest admiration for Hitler, explains in the House of Lords that Mussolini is not prepared to see Franco defeated, which means, that while he is prepared to withdraw Italian troops from Spain, he is also determined to send another Italian army to see that Spain has the Government he wishes to establish there. He is also a believer in "self-determination." What a time!

Hitler, whose word our Prime Minister relies on, has assured the world, and Mr. Churchill, that there is no opinion opposed to his in Germany, that the whole of the German people are solidly with him. That is good news, for it becomes evident that the large number of concentration camps all over Germany are just holiday resorts; the fact that Hitler is afraid to move out without being accompanied by an armed guard is merely to prevent too many people throwing kisses at him; and that the thousands upon thousands of Storm Troopers and others who are engaged in watching what people read, or listen to on the radio sets, or whisper to each other, is all a dream. It is Winston Churchill who is the liar, it is Hitler whose passion for truth and for keeping his word is on a level with the high ethical standard of Mussolini.

We had just written the above when we noted that the papers of November 8 (our press day) report that there is to be a sensational trial of a number of Army Generals, and others, for plotting to overthrow the Hitler regime. But perhaps this was a mere plot to provide Hitler with a continuous flow of floral bouquets. It cannot be that those who knew Germany best were right when they said that there was no reasonable likelihood of Hitler going to war at the beginning of October, that his Generals had warned him he was in no position to go to war, that he would have collapsed at the first sign of resistance from England and France, that the whole thing was an example of transparent bluffing. Hitler may now be in a position to punish the plotters, but their real undoer was Mr. Neville Chamberlain.

To the many different forms of broadcast propaganda there is now added an International Catholic Radio Bureau, which aims at giving Catholics the kind of service the Church wishes them to have. We should have no objection to this if it so happened that the same people heard different forms of opinion expressed "on the air." That, of course, is not the case, and it is not intended that it should be the case. Each one aims at giving its listeners a one-sided message, and each aims at persuading a certain section of the people from hearing any but one form of opinion. With the result that, so far as these different radio agencies can manage it, the aim is to keep people as ignorant as possible. If listeners tune in to different forms of propaganda this aim is defeated, but in the main listeners will attend only to opinions with which they already are in agreement.

The common remark here is, in religion or in politics, "I do not agree with the opinions expressed by that paper, therefore I do not read it." Or "I do not agree with this speaker's opinion, therefore I never listen to him." These people make good party men, or good church members—in other words, fine examples of educated ignorance. And this attitude of mind is not peculiar to Conservatives in politics, or staunch believers in religion. It is to be found among all kinds of people. Unless one has naturally a liberal mind a formal heresy may be as dogmatic and as one-sided as orthodoxy.

We have, of course, no sympathy with the anti-Jewish movement, whether in Palestine or elsewhere, and as we have said more than once, the only possible good feature about the attempt to give believers in the Jewish religion what was called a "national home," was that it rescued a number from persecution in other

countries. The bad feature was the possible result of perpetuating the Jewish religion, when the world's real need was to get rid of all religion. We also recognize the factitious character of a great deal of the unrest in Palestine, which is largely due to the activities of Italy and Germany, a fact which, unless our secret service is made up of congenital idiots, must be well known to the Government of this country. Nor do we think that giving Italy and Germany "tasters" here and there will bring about peace in the East. Britain in the East is rather too vulnerable for Italy, Germany, and Japan to lose sight of what is, to them, a profitable source of blackmail.

All the same, we cannot pass unnoticed the development of our own policy of bringing the Arabs to order. Attacking people in arms is one thing, but the policy of blowing up whole villages, pictures of which have appeared many times in our press, savours rather too much of Fascist policy for one to let pass without protest. It should be possible to protect civilians in Palestine without playing the game of Guernica to a slightly different tone. We know that, as is in the case on the North-West Frontier of India, British bombs never hurt women and children, but, still accidents might happen.

The Church in Zululand is not having a very easy time. According to a meeting of the Zululand Missionary Society, the natives are in a state of fear, bewildered by the conditions of industrial life, and embittered against white men who have broken up their native life. But the Bishop of Southampton had nothing to say of importance against this ill-treatment—at least, if he did, it does not appear in the report of the meeting we saw—but complains that they must have £750 extra this year. Then the Zululand Missionary Society may get along with its work of conversion too.

After all, whole masses of the natives, not merely in South Africa, where the Government has announced as part of its policy its intention to keep the natives down, but in many parts of Africa, are in little better than a state of slavery. Africans are paid not more than a tenth of what a white man receives, they may not own land except under special provisions, and even then ownership is not generally given. On some of the gold fields children are employed ten and twelve hours per day, and tuberculosis and syphilis are rife among the natives. In South Africa many educated coloured men are treated much as coloured men were treated in the Southern States, and the black generally is made to feel that he is an unwanted stranger in his own land. We do not wonder that the natives are not in a hurry to embrace Christianity, nor are we surprised at the silence of most of the Christian clergy on this subject. We understand that a report on the whole subject of the treatment of the natives in Africa is on the eve of publication.

The *Daily Express* describes a publication it is sponsoring as a "New Kind of History Book." It purports to describe *these tremendous years*. Well, there is nothing new under the sun, and this platitude is certainly true of the "kind of History" this volume contains.

There is a sort of sequel to the vigorous bombardment of Prayers which pathetically true believers addressed to the Throne of Grace—asking God—and Sir Samuel Hoare—to stop the Godless Conference. A "praying society" has issued a Manifesto apparently blaming God for not acting promptly in the matter of the Congress. In the expensive advertisements issued by the society, God receives definite instructions to "MAKE HASTE O GOD, TO FRUSTRATE THE GODLESS MENACE IN BRITAIN." It is rough stuff; it accuses God, and it seems to suggest that God is asked—not too politely—to confine His work henceforth to our own country.

What George Eliot called "Otherworldliness" has always been the source of failure on the part of the supernaturalists to attempt to make the present life as good for mankind as it might be. Dr. A. E. Garvie sees some kind of inkling into the truth of the sceptics' complaint in all ages. In the *British Weekly* (in the editor's absence, by the way) Dr. Garvie admits that:—

There is a tendency in intense piety to become exclusive, to sacrifice the wholeness of human life and lose much of its fullness by undue concentration on the observance (private or public) of what are regarded as the obligations of religion, apart from other human interests, activities, and relations. God is not only distinguished, but separated, from the world and man.

It is not too late to mend, but we deplore the spirit in which Christians so often mix their religion with social organizations—when they do not ignore them. They seem to see in the social world only a new field for their wretched proselytism and sectarian propaganda. They then smother humanitarianism under the wet blanket of godism.

The American weekly illustrated called *Look*, gives a photograph of the Rev. Dr. Z. E. Phillips, Rector of a church in Washington, D.C. Dr. Phillips gets a good income for his parish services, but he is also Chaplain in the Senate House (the American House of Lords). *Look* has "looked" into the salary list and finds that Dr. Phillips receives the enormous sum of \$420—about £84—for each Prayer he offers up to God. Well may *Look* comment that this chaplain "lives on easy street."

A "Religious Film" is being shown, called "Where Love is God is"—presumably based on Tolstoy's story with a similar title. It is open to a Tolstoy or a film producer to claim that where Love is there are other things as well. There is nobody on earth so incapable of deduction as to assert that Where God is—or is believed in—there Love is also!

There is a great deal of indignation among the godly in Southampton. It seems that the Borough Council has resolved to remove all religious newspapers and periodicals from the reading room on the ground of want of room. The Rural Dean of Southampton, and all the Christian bodies, are very disturbed at this move. Canon Jolly says that while papers on building and poultry are permitted religious papers are excluded, and while people may read about fowls they may not read about God. The Canon says the Council is worse than Hitler.

But we wonder whether Canon Jolly extends his protest against the exclusion of religious papers to the exclusion of papers such as the *Freethinker*. After all, there is a great deal of religion in newspapers and periodicals that are not specifically religious, but there is only one *Freethinker* in this country. The Council claims it is acting only with an eye to available space. The *Freethinker* is excluded from certain libraries because it criticizes Christianity. No paper has the right to be in any public library; on the other hand no Council can with justice to ratepayers and the general public exclude a paper because certain people do not agree with the opinions it advocates. Canon Jolly is getting a taste of the treatment given to Freethinkers, and doesn't like it.

Bishop Graham Browne, in a speech about the "Holy" Land, the other day, said that the Christians in Palestine had prayed for thirteen centuries that "Christian rule might be established" there, and not that of either Moslem or Jew. It was unbelievable that a land containing hundreds of Christian churches and institutions should be handed over to a non-Christian people. Moreover as "the Christian doctrine was that when the Jews rejected Jesus as their Messiah, all the promises to them were forfeited," it was the Christian Church which inherited the promises, and so the right and proper people to rule in Palestine were Christians. Nothing rankles the good Christian more than the rejection of his par-

ticular myth, and even after nearly 2,000 years he wants the Jews to pay for it. Bishop Brown is a striking example of "Blessed are the meek."

The Rev. E. Allen, speaking at the Annual Dinner of the Kobe Fellowship, said there was a time when the Church in Japan was popular, now nothing from the West is popular except armaments. We expect Bishop Allen knows better than he says. At no time did the Church in Japan find itself "popular." The Japanese were merely polite to Christians, which is a very different thing from what Bishop Allen implies. But the Japanese always welcomed armaments from Christian countries, because they recognized that when it came to the practice of war, and the manufacturing of death-dealing instruments, the Christian nations stood an easy first in the world. In this matter Christian Britain has done its part in providing the world with murderous armaments, and has no great objection to doing so even when it knows that in certain circumstances these arms will be turned against us.

Cardinal Kaspar, who is the Archbishop of Prague, has just pointed out in discussing his country's recent crisis, that "the nation's previous rulers were Godless." This, of course, explains quite a lot, including the crisis. Obviously had they been all-believing Catholics the result would have been quite different. There was also something else which helped the recent melancholy changes in the country. The ancient statue of "Our Lady" erected in Prague as a protection against the Swiss was taken down by the late Government. How Hitler and Co. would have been baffled if only that statue had been allowed to remain! We give this information to show how the Catholic mind still works; it would still order a religious procession with some dead bones to stop a bubonic plague or some other outbreak of a virulent disease.

At Worcester Diocesan Conference, the Bishop of Liverpool (Dr. A. A. David), suggested a levy of five per cent on the stake money in football pools. Whatever the pros and cons of gambling may be, a cleric is quite out of court in butting-in with an opinion. Company promoters and the stock and share markets can testify to *Crockford's* being one of their largest fields for clients. Competitions and "little flutters" of various kinds have also a fair sprinkling of clerical participators. But on this "levy" question much may be adduced against Dr. David. His church has enormous capital and income from sources no more honourable than gambling; would he support a levy on those funds for "playing fields and social amenities"—as he proposes in the case of the pools? This may be said for the pools: many of the poor benefit from their modest—and too often desperate—outlay; while from the ecclesiastical funds no "levy" would ever be agreed to by its controllers: not even to avert general famine.

This is the 86th year of the existence of the Charity Commission. The country has 41,918 separate charities with resources amounting to over ninety million pounds (£90,462,865 to be correct). There are 3,063 homeless in London every night, according to a recent estimate—walking the streets without money to pay for a bed. The "lucky" ones get a "charity" ticket for a bed: which, as rule, is a filthy bundle of unrest, which a decent man wouldn't permit his dog to use. Of course, too, the "bed" is one of many in a common room, which accommodates scrofulous, consumptive and venereal patrons with impartiality. The "conveniences" are best imagined, being too revolting to be described. We have to admit that our description is based on the incontestible evidence of one who has experienced conditions in the RELIGIOUS hostels; no doubt the L.C.C. provide far better and cleaner accommodation.

The Rev. R. G. Balleine is retiring from St. James's, Jamaica Road, S.E., after 30 years "ministry." He leaves a parish of "wealthy folks"; of the "richest and happiest folks." That's what he told a pressman, any-

how. And where is this wonderfully "rich" parish?—Why, Bermondsey! And you thought it a rather poverty-stricken place, perhaps? Ah! to Mr. Balleine wealth lies in "the richness of the qualities of the human mind." This "genial, grey-haired giant of a man" thus spake his "philosophy" to the Long Acre chap as he (the "giant") "slapped his knee, and his booming laugh rang through the house." Possibly it was fortunate that the house was a vicarage; not so susceptible to collapse from a "boom" as the more humble and frail abodes of such "wealthy" parishioners. (We are justified in assuming, for lack of a personal inspection, that the vicarage is the cosiest or most imposing house in the vicinity—as is usually the case in the worst slums).

Mrs. Elizabeth Watts, of Stourpaine, Dorset, has brought up a family of three while lying in bed in her thatched cottage for 30 years—in one room. She has to leave the cottage, as it has been condemned. An *Evening Standard* reporter describes some of Mrs. Watts' experiences, from which we quote the following:—

Once all three children had measles together, she told me. Two were upstairs and one lay on the couch next to my bed. Even the local nurse could not come because of fear of infection. The doctor came, and, somehow, I struggled through.

I can still remember how a boy bringing milk just opened the front door, hurriedly left the bottle on the table, far out of my reach. I then had a stick to drag things across the room to me, but when I tried to get the milk it upset, and we had to wait until another caller came.

There might have been room for Mrs. Watts in Fulham Palace had its occupant not found it so hard to make ends meet. However: "Land of Hope and Glory . . . God who made thee mighty, make thee mightier yet."

Czecho Freethinkers' Relief Fund

We are pleased to note that our Fund for the relief of Czech Freethinkers is growing, but it is not yet what it ought to be. We know that times are hard, and money is scarce, and also that many have already subscribed to other Funds for the general purpose of relieving the Refugees. But the matter is urgent, the money subscribed will not merely soften the hardships of the victim of the Hitler Terror, it may also serve to keep alive in Czechoslovakia a nucleus of Freethought.

Previously acknowledged, £30 10s. 6d.; Mrs. F. M. Viles, £10; Miss F. Adams, £10; Dr. Annie R. Niven, £2 2s.; Edwin Walley, £1 1s.; H. V. Creech, 5s.; G. Vincent, 5s.; W. Allan, 5s.; H. Preece, £1; J. Hammond, £1; A. Forbes, £1; Mr. and Mrs. Greenall, 10s.; B. Sage, 5s.; L. Cheetham, £1; H. Pointer, 5s.; T. Hobb, 10s.; H. J. V. Templeman, £1; H.T.H., 10s.; R. H. S. Standfast, 10s.; R. Hunter, 3s.; George Royle, £2 2s.; F. A. Hornibrook, £1 1s.; F. Terry, 10s.; J. Marsh, £1; G. A. Bide, 5s.; Fred Muston, 2s.; G.B. (Glasgow), 2s. 6d.; L. Marcan, 2s. 6d.; J. Almond, 5s.; J. Bownes, 2s. 6d.; Mrs. L. Budge, 10s.; A. Brooks, 2s.; E. H. Hassell, £1; per Liverpool N.S.S. Branch, £1 10s. 6d.; per Birkenhead N.S.S. Branch Collection, 14s. 1d.; D. C. Drummond, 10s.; H. Trummel, £1 1s.; Mr. and Mrs. Parkinson, 5s.; J. Bryce, 10s.; A. T. Stevens, 10s. 6d.; No Name, 1s.; J. Pearson, 1s.; J. Lane, 10s.; F. S. B. Lawes, £1 1s.; F. Akroyd, 5s.; South London N.S.S. Branch Collection, 13s. 6d.; Mrs. McIntosh and Friends, 10s.; Peter Foster, £1. Total to date £78 8s. 7d.

Corrections. In last week's issue, Mrs. M. Vanstone's contribution should read £1; and J. H. Minnett should read J. H. Minett.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

To Circulating and Distributing the Freethinker.—J. Lane, 10s.

H. J. V. TEMPLEMAN.—A large number of our people, like yourself, have already contributed to other funds for helping the Czech refugees. We appreciate all the more the "twicers."

B. SAGE.—Glad to hear you are pleased with the *Pamphlets for the People* series. More will be issued as soon as possible, but Mr. Cohen is very busy in other directions, and extra work is constantly cropping up.

J. HAMMOND.—Very pleased to hear from you. It is like a voice from the Shades. Pleased to have your appreciation of what we have done.

J. SNAITH.—It is a mere quibble. The doctrines of the Christianity in being in England, in pre-Reformation days, were, with the exception of heresies, those of the Roman Church. But the Roman Church was not the State Church; that came in with Protestantism. The Roman Church aimed at making the State a department of the Church, the Protestants mainly aimed at the Church being a department of the State. Of course, in pre-Reformation days the power of the State was usually at the service of the Church, but that is another question. Glad to have your praise of the *Freethinker*. We do our best.

"TAB CAN" writes.—"Is it contended that the Jews are no more a race than the Mohammedans? I write to say that I have read of black Jews existing in certain parts of the world. Can you throw any light upon this?" It seems to us that an explanation of why there are black Christians answers why there are black Jews. It is only a Hitler or a Goering, and, by compulsion, a Mussolini, who would make opinion depend upon the colour of a man's skin.

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

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

To-day (November 13) Mr. Cohen will speak in the Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester. The lecture will commence at 6.30.

A lady, an Anglican, who sympathizes with what we have said concerning the way in which the British people were "saved" by Mr. Chamberlain, and who further agrees that the issue was confused by false statements, and further that the "Munich Pact was much worse than Hitler's bombs," chides us for saying that if the Pact would advance the interests of the Church the Archbishop and his clergy would welcome it. Our correspondent thinks this statement "catty," and unjustified.

We agree if the issue was placed before a responsible Churchman in the naked form, "Will you endorse the

Hitler Concentration Camps, the torture of men, women and children, etc., etc., provided these things advance the interests of the Church," he would probably reply in the negative. But things rarely happen in this open way. They are wrapped up with a number of other considerations. When Britain made war on the Dutch Republics, it was not because of financial schemes of annexation and exploitation, but because the liberty of Britishers was threatened, and the honour of the country was at stake. Every country will give similar illustrations. So also when heretics were burned and tortured, or imprisoned, the real issue was not put before the people—the authorities did not put it before themselves—will you advance the interests of the Church by torturing and ill-treating and robbing men and women who have committed no crime save that of not agreeing with you? It became a question of the honour of God, the glory of the Cross, and the purity of the faith.

When our Government insisted on non-intervention in Spain, it did not say this will tie the hands of the Spanish Government and give Italy and Germany a free hand, it talked about saving England and Europe from war, and restricting the area of the conflict, and so forth. Our correspondent must realize that the villainy in the world occurs because men and women lack the courage and the honesty to look at what they are doing with open eyes. And in no other two fields does rascality enjoy so privileged a position as in politics and religion. The man who can do wrong with his eyes open, and facing the essential meaning of what he is doing, is rare. The common thief pleads hard circumstances, the politician fools himself with talk about the interests of the nation he serves—or fools. The Churchman doses himself with liberal allowances of God's will, the supremacy of the faith, and the eternal welfare of man's soul. That is why, when we throw the pretences on one side and get down to plain, and usually ugly, facts, we are told that we are "catty"—when we are not called worse.

Lord Hugh Cecil is to propose before the next Church Assembly, that every holder of a benefice, including a bishopric, should be retired compulsorily at the age of 75. A reporter, announcing this, refers to the longevity of the clergy as "notorious." A very suitable adjective too, when we consider that longevity is best achieved by the least expenditure of "grey matter." Apropos: the journalist speculates as to the bishoprics of Durham and London, shortly to be in the market, and says: "They need men of robust physique as well as intellectual vigour." (Our Italics). Clerical leisure and opportunity should easily provide for the former condition, but a parson would need to brouse *outside* "the fold" for the latter, unless content with the "intellectual vigour" of the Bishop of London!

Mr. G. Illingworth, of Leeds, writes us a testimonial for the *Freethinker*. He was Christian in 1914. Then in 1915 he "took to the Atheist outlook." He remained in that strange state until 1932, when through reading the *Freethinker*, he again became a believer in the Bible. A most remarkable and, we believe, although some might not, completely truthful story. But if Mr. Illingworth would really like to show his gratitude for his reconversion, we suggest that he converts himself into a propagandist for the *Freethinker* amongst his Christian acquaintances. It might save them from falling into the terrible state he was in himself from 1915 to 1932. If he cares to buy copies for distribution among those whose Christianity is shaky, we are prepared to send a quantity at greatly reduced rates. And we have a real admiration for a man who can adopt an Atheistic outlook as one changes from a blue necktie to a red one.

By the way, we have quite a number of letters lately from good, truthful Christians, who tell us that it was the *Freethinker* that brought them to Christianity. If we did not know the passion for truth that Christians have we might conclude that the *Freethinker* has hit them rather hard, and has set them "lying for the greater glory of God."

The Philosophy of Joad

THOUGH his system may similarly be classed as vitalism, C. H. M. Joad has taken exception to much in Bergson's philosophy, and there are some important differences in his presentation of the vital force.

Like the French philosopher, Joad also asks why life should have gone on evolving fresh forms, an attitude which can only be understood on the assumption that its author is not aware of the new light thrown on the causes of mutation by the Mendelian investigators. This may be the case, for, in his *Guide to Modern Thought*, there is no mention of the work of Morgan, though he again asks what causes variation.

Three principles are posited in Joad's pluralism, namely, life, matter and value. Life uses matter as its medium of expression and through it reaches the realm of value, a third existential principle, which contains truth, beauty and goodness. Life is diversified by matter as a river is broken up in its course, and becomes manifest in individuals, who, their purpose served, are cast off at death and reabsorbed into the mainstream. As this life force finds its path barred by matter, which imposes limitations, this makes it struggle to acquire new powers of control, and thus it uses matter to accomplish its ends.

"Each individual monad is a current of life informing a collection of material particles and temporarily diverted from the main river."¹ The vital force has nothing to do with any theistic conception; this he makes abundantly clear. "God" he regards as "the product of human terror and the prop of human pride,"² an imaginary being who comforts our wretchedness, calms our fears and makes us feel important. Joad's atheism is not to the liking of Dean Matthews, who derides³ his godless system.

Though the monads have each free will, life, which is itself eternal, transcends them and has a measure of control over them. After waiting for matter to attain the necessary stage of complexity, Life takes hold of it and emerges at progressively higher levels, jumping, as it were, from one level to another in purposive fashion. The emerged new, which, unlike a mere machine, is more than the sum total of its factors, has therefore come "out of nothing."⁴

This idea, entertained by many writers, and used against materialism, that a machine is nothing more than the sum total of its parts, is most unsatisfactory. The machine does not escape analogy with life. No mere collection of nuts, bolts and levers can do the work done by the machine.

According to Joad, as matter is more and more controlled and conquered, life is able to turn its attention to value, its located goal, for we are not to suppose that the struggle has been aimless. At first a mere blind thrust of energy with "unconscious purpose," effort brings development, which implies direction, which in turn implies a goal, and the term "higher" indicates that we have in mind an objective standard. Life is purposive change, unlike Bergson's or Schopenhauer's, whose Will had no reason for objectifying itself. Evolution is the progress of awareness, and Life "advances from awareness of matter to awareness of value."⁵ Geniuses are sent to guide the way, but each living organism is an objectivization of the Life Force. In his contribution to *Contemporary British Philosophy* Joad suggests that this force marshals Russell's "neutral particulars" as a charge of electricity differently arranges steel filings.

¹ *Matter, Life and Value.*

² *Rationalist Annual*, 1930.

³ *God in Christian Thought and Experience.*

⁴ *The Meaning of Life.*

⁵ *Matter, Life and Value.*

What Russell thinks of this offer is not known, but it is not difficult to speculate.

In consciousness the Life Force becomes aware of its goal, though its immediate purpose is always changing. Ethics is awareness of goodness, aesthetics of beauty, and these reveal the existence of a world of values. Beauty has objective existence and music is the reproduction in a material medium of the arrangements of the world of value. "Life ends in the contemplation of value," and so we shall "gaze for evermore on the beauty that lies at the journey's end." (*Ib.*)

As a poetic expression of life's conceived mission Joad's presentation of its triumphant march through matter to gain the citadel of value is perhaps not uninspiring. Its scientific weakness lies in splitting nature into a number of separate principles, whereas the whole trend of research is to exhibit the unity of existence, and in denying to that unity the power of doing its work without the help of a historically discarded vital force, which has always impeded advances in understanding. This rift leads to his removing mind from any origin in material nature. It is "the bare activity of awareness." Even allowing his leanings to a Neo-Kantian psychology, it is impossible to take literally the statement that "minds can think without the preceding stimulus of sensory experience." His example of the effect of mind on body, a debate fixed for next week, which makes him sweat with apprehension now, is most unconvincing, as all such instances must be, since the fear is obviously determined, not by something in the future, but by something in the past, such as previous experiences of debating, the knowledge of weaknesses in his own case, of his liability to stage fright, of his opponent's skill, etc.

Nor can we see evidence of a mind divorced from cerebral functioning in so-called "deliverances of the moral sense," and "testimony of the religious and . . . mystical insight" (*Ib.*), for the evidence available goes to show that no form of mental behaviour is permanently removed from scientific treatment. Moreover, when he says the present world is "the outcome of a mental principle of selection," he is only saying, in less scientific language, what was said by the materialistic writer, G. H. Lewes, that our sense organs condition our awareness of externality.

Some biological phenomena he adduces to illustrate purposiveness, but whether such cases are permanently incapable of explanation may be judged from the history of controversy involving vitalist theory, and the biologist will be surprised to learn that "birds grew wings because they strove to fly,"⁶ from which we must suppose that eagles grew claws because they strove to kill, and on Joad's purposive view of life this must give cause for some surprise. The argument from the problem of evil has not quite the same force against Joad's theory as against a theistic teleology, for with vitalism there is the obstructive material to contend with. Yet while this may account for those evils which could arise from the conflict of life with matter, it still cannot account for the conflict of life with life, if the vital principle transcends the monads and has a purpose in view. That is, the phenomena of pain arising from disease or material discomfort need not invalidate Joad's system: the explanation can be that matter is not properly under control. Other phenomena, such as the cruelty evident in the carnage of inter-monadic struggle, with the weakest to the wall, and more particularly the repeated wasteful and aimless experiments undertaken by the purposive life force, are more destructive to his

⁶ *Problems of Life and Mind.*

⁷ *The Meaning of Life.*

philosophy. The defects of a theory of cosmic purpose are not wholly to be escaped by substituting a vital principle for God.

The redundancy of vitalism in science, the lack of evidence for indeterminacy and the natural explanation of its appearance, the vanishing of the supposed boundary between the living and the non-living, and the easy embodiment of the newer conceptions of matter into the materialist scheme, all bases for Joad's beliefs, I have before dealt with. Without in any way subscribing to the view expressed by a contributor to *Mind* (January, 1933), that "Joad's complete philosophical naïveté makes him an easy prey," it is surprising that he should attach so much importance to the "logical refutation," which states that if materialism be true, then our thoughts may be chemically sound but not logically valid. The materialist may ask, Why not? Why must our thoughts, naturally conditioned, yield only false beliefs? The fallacy of the argument lies in supposing chemical conditions to be the only ones operative, in which case, there being no external standard by which to test our beliefs, truth and error have no meaning. But the external world of experience has a say in the matter besides our own physiological composition, and it is the stimulus from without that affects the chemical functioning within. Moreover, it provides a testing ground, a criterion by which our beliefs may be judged; there is nothing mysterious or anti-materialistic in the fact that we can arrive at verifiable truths by thoughts, of whose causal history the chemical functioning is part.

That Mr. Joad, here in a numerous company, is confused about the materialist conception of mind, is well illustrated in *The Meaning of Life*, in which he says at one point that mind, according to the materialist, is "nothing more than brain action," and a little later says, what is nearer the truth, that the materialist believes "mind is a function or aspect of the brain." If both statements are correct Mr. Joad believes brain action is the same thing as the function, and presumably believes the burning coal to be no different from the surrounding heat.

Fortunately, he recognizes that the difficulties in his system "are no less formidable than those of rival hypotheses."³

G. H. TAYLOR.

³ *Mind and Matter*.

A Conjuror and Spiritualism Again

It is a pity that Mr. Will Goldston did not address his reply to my article of a few weeks ago to the readers of this journal, instead of to the *Psychic News*. They would have been able to see if he really had fulfilled his boast of "trouncing" me because what I wrote was full of "evasions." It is a pity also that he should have lost his temper. Mr. Goldston can be very urbane—if just a little malicious—when he is dealing with the foibles of his fellow illusionists, but it is quite a different story when his own childish illusions are criticized.

Moreover, it is rather intriguing to find that after "trouncing" me for nearly three columns, he should suddenly ask me for my "authority" in dealing with Spiritualists. "Let him tell us," cries Mr. Goldston, "how many famous magicians he has known personally, how many seances he has attended and with whom; and what precautions he has taken to prevent fraud." Now without wishing further to hurt the already lacerated feelings of the founder of the Magician's Club, let me tell him that my "authority"

is not the question at all. Nor does it matter two hoots that I have never had the supreme honour of shaking hands with the world's Master Magicians. And God forbid that I should ever set myself up as an authority for preventing fraud on the part of Mr. Goldston's most cherished mediums. All I was concerned with was an examination of the reasons which made Mr. Goldston a confirmed and voluble Spiritualist. And when I called him the "unique" conjuror who was a Spiritualist, I had in mind, of course, that he was the one often writing about it. I do not remember either Mr. Horace Goldin or the Rigoletto Brothers dealing with the question in published works. When they do so, I shall examine what they say without being the least impressed by their reputation as illusionists.

And may I add that I am a little tired with being asked, when faced with some tall story, whether I have the nerve to call the man who relates it a liar. How do I know if, for example, the story of Mr. Goldston's experiences with a levitated table which took place (presumably) about thirty years ago, is put down absolutely accurately? How can anyone say? Millions of people have been hoodwinked by fraudulent mediums; but the story they told was put forward with the same blandlike faith Mr. Goldston shows when dealing with the blind medium, Anderson. What are the facts as told in *Secrets of Famous Illusionists*? A heavy table, with the medium kicking a man upon it, is levitated to the ceiling in spite of thirteen men doing their utmost to keep it on earth. It then careers gently back to the ground. Although heavy hob-nailed boots were used for the kicking, the victim did not feel any pain. I say that if this is genuine, it should convert every unbeliever in the world—to a belief at least in some power not yet understood (but not necessarily to survival). It is beyond anything that Houdini or Le Roy ever did. If Anderson had performed this marvellous feat in London at one of the twice-nightly music halls, he would have attracted the attention of the world. No anti-spiritualist could have affirmed his unbelief—in something—in the face of such a stupendous proof of the existence of some unknown natural power. Yet Mr. Goldston is merely "astounded"; it did not even make him a "convinced spiritualist." And he loses his temper when I point this out, and when I add that this story is related to tell us *why* he is a Spiritualist. Moreover the other twelve people who were present seem to have left no record whatever of this stupendous miracle. They probably were so used to such "spirit" marvels that this one would be taken for granted—just one of thousands of similar proofs. And the medium Anderson merely fades away; I cannot remember his name in the large number of books and articles I have read dealing with "survival."

Mr. Goldston is angry that I described his sittings with Rudi Schneider as "mostly resulting in nothing." Well, this is quite true. We are told after he had sat with the medium for a while that "no phenomena followed." The sitting was adjourned, and on resumption "again we were disappointed." After these two failures, "an uncanny gust of wind" came along. Then there was some "sledge-hammer thumping" and more waiting. And again "nothing happened," says Mr. Goldston (page 126). This proves that my article was "full of evasions." Really the readers of *Psychic News* must be so used to swallowing marvels that they will have no difficulty in swallowing even this.

We next come to Mr. Maskelyne and Houdini, whom I described as utter unbelievers in "survival." Mr. Goldston says I was wrong. "If he denies this," he adds "let him quote any saying or writing of these two famous conjurors which proves him

right." This is a definite challenge which I gladly take up, and if Mr. Goldston was unaware of the following extracts, I trust he will reprint them in full in the *Psychic News*. It would be a pity for the readers of that journal to be wallowing in the same pitiful ignorance.

The first extract is from *The Supernatural*, by Lionel E. Weatherley, M.D., and J. N. Maskelyne. The following is by Mr. Maskelyne himself, and is from pages 182-183:—

In this year of grace 1891, to write upon the deceptions which have been practised under the name of Modern Spiritualism is surely akin to thrashing a dead horse; but since this *pernicious* doctrine has ever been productive of so much evil, and has done so much to fill our lunatic asylums, the author of the present work considers it would be incomplete without a chapter on the subject. . . . In the limits of a single chapter it is impossible to treat this *gigantic imposture* in an exhaustive manner. . . . there does not exist, and there never has existed a professed "medium" of note who has not been convicted of trickery or fraud. . . . it is the old story retold—the story of Duplicity feeding upon Folly. . . . [Spiritualism] is a doctrine, cradled in credulity and fostered by fraud, which teaches, and professes to prove that the spirits of those departed can be brought again into material contact with those still upon earth. . . . it is a remnant of the superstition which produced the folk-lore of ghosts and spectres in former times, a superstition that has weakened the intellect, and destroyed the mental faculties of thousands, rendering them an easy prey to the avarice of impostors, who have found it easier to live by their wits than to work honestly for a living. [Italics mine.]

All this is by way of an introduction, but Mr. Maskelyne goes into the history of some of the most famous "mediums," and I have no more space to copy his scathing contempt for the whole caboodle. I can only add that I know of no stronger exposure of the sorry business. But I am quite sure that Mr. Maskelyne will be held up by Mr. Goldston, in spite of this, as a shining example of the true Spiritualist who really believes in "survival," but not in "fraudulent" mediums. This is how the innocent rank and file in the Spiritualistic movement are always gulled.

As for Houdini, here are his own words from *A Magician Among the Spirits*, a book packed with the most damning evidence against Spiritualism that I know:—

During the past thirty years I have read every single piece of literature on the subject of Spiritualism that I could. I have accumulated one of the largest libraries in the world on psychic phenomena, spiritualism, magic, witchcraft, demonology, evil spirits, etc., and I doubt if anyone in the world has so complete a library on modern Spiritualism, but nothing I have ever read concerning the so-called Spiritualistic phenomena has impressed me as being genuine. . . . in thirty years I have not found one incident that savoured of the genuine. If there had been any unalloyed demonstration to work on, one that did not reek of fraud, one that could not be reproduced by earthly powers, then there would be something for a foundation, but up to the present everything that I have investigated has been the result of deluded brains or those which were too actively and intensely willing to believe.

No doubt here again Mr. Goldston will read into that Houdini's intense belief in Spiritualism, and the readers of the *Psychic News* whoop with joy at the way that I have been so thoroughly "trounced."

But Houdini went further. He reproduced the following letter from a fellow conjuror, Dr. A.M. Wilson, the Editor of the *Sphinx*—the leading magical paper in the U.S.A.:—

My dear Houdini,—For almost sixty one years I have been witnessing and investigating Spiritualism and Spiritism. . . . Up to this time I have not met a medium, celebrated or obscure, that was not a gross fraud, nor seen a manifestation that was not tricky, and that could not be duplicated by an expert magician. . . . I have never seen a manifestation of any kind or character that was not fraudulent.

This will again prove, I expect, at the vigorous hands of Mr. Goldston, that Spiritualism is absolutely true, and that everybody that has ever lived on this earth is still living in his wonderful Summerland.

Let me assure Mr. Goldston, however, that though he looks upon me as an "incompetent critic," I have no personal feelings with regard to him whatever, except that I have enjoyed his books and—it will surprise him, of course—I have a dozen of them on my shelves. I wanted to see on what grounds he believed in "survival," and I can only express my surprise again that they are so worthless.

H. CUTNER.

The Blessings of God

SMITH: "Formerly one could rarely peruse a newspaper without noticing an account of the ridiculous ceremony of a parson blessing either crops, ships or aeroplanes. Nowadays in addition motor-cars, fish, and even circus elephants appear among the blessed. Do people really believe in this nonsense? It bears a striking resemblance to the incantations of an African witch-doctor."

Robinson: "I do not blame the parsons for staging these performances so much as I do the silly people who patronize them. If there were no patrons there would be no performances. The exhibitions are intended as an advertisement to induce credulous people to retain their interest in religion, and, incidentally, to give more liberally to the cause. It is really a business proposition and apparently a successful one."

S.: "In my opinion the parsons are guilty of false pretences. They must know that these so-called blessings are valueless. If they were otherwise the owners of ships, motor-cars and aeroplanes would not fail to demand and obtain reduced premiums from the Insurance Companies."

R.: "I agree. There is no limit to the ingenuity of the parsons in advertising their wares. I give them credit for that. Did you notice how they attempted to make capital out of the breaking of the late drought? As you know, the newspapers reported many of the services which they held throughout the country thanking God for responding favourably to their prayers for rain. Seeing that the drought had already caused damage to the crops to the extent of ten million pounds, services of protest to God for allowing it would appear to have been more appropriate."

S.: "Although all the newspaper reports which I read appeared to give one the impression that the rain had been bestowed in response to prayer, none went quite so far as a country rector who in his Parish Magazine concluded his effort on the subject thus: "How grateful we should be to the Divine Father who holds the clouds in the hollow of his hands, and never lets his children down."

R.: "Never lets his children down! What a travesty of the truth. The Rector's knowledge of past and current events must be of the most meagre description. Has he not heard of the terrible calamities with which the world has been afflicted during the past few years involving the death of countless numbers of the Divine Father's children? If this is not 'letting his children down,' what is it? I ask."

S. : "Of course he has heard of these calamities, but he is merely a typical example of the average Christian, and his outburst is therefore not surprising. Experience has proved that even minds of the highest order are often unable to rid themselves of the stupid religious ideas which were instilled into them in their youth. It would be amusing if it were not so pathetic."

PRO REASON.

Obituary

DEATH OF SYDNEY A. GIMSON

It is without sorrow for the passing, but with profound regret on my own part, and I am sure, on the part of Freethinkers all over the country, that I have to record the death of Sydney A. Gimson, of Leicester. No name is better known among British Freethinkers, none was more respected, and in his native town the respect passed easily into affection.

My own acquaintance with Gimson dates back at least forty-five years, and it did not take long for that acquaintance to develop into a friendship that was never clouded for a moment. I prized his confidence in me, for he was not one that gave either friendship or confidence lightly, and his long experience in public life had taught him what to look for in those he honoured by his friendship. His confidence bore all the marks of a compliment from one who was not in the habit of sacrificing judgment to mere politeness.

Sydney Gimson took a notable part in the public life of Leicester, and while that is an aspect of his life of which I can speak as an outsider, the character of the man was enough to guarantee its value to the city. Unfortunately our public services—so far as they are electorally filled—are never overcrowded with men and women whose integrity is proof against the bribe of social position or other forms of mental and moral corruption. It is in connexion with his work in the Freethought movement that I am best able to speak of him. In that relation the name of Gimson means much to the City of Leicester. The Hall in which the Society holds its meetings owes its existence to Sydney's father, Josiah Gimson. For fifty years his son was President of the Society, and he held that post until his death. The welfare of the movement in Leicester was always his uppermost thought, and the Society owes much to his wise guidance, which never approached dictatorship, to his intelligent conduct of affairs, and to a particularly hospitable mind which welcomed every idea, and weighed its value with an impartiality I always admired. He had a high culture of a very real kind. It was never the showy learning that so many mistake for culture, but the genuine output of a mind well stored with the wisdom of some of the world's best writers, digested, assimilated, and used for the wisest ends. I recall as memories to be treasured many hours spent in his well-lined study, with discussions of books and their writers.

I heard from him shortly before his death. He said he was "waiting impatiently for the end." I went down to Leicester to see him, and found him sitting in his room, calm, resigned, feeling that his active work was done, and—waiting. But there was his old ready smile, the old interest in the affairs of the world he was soon to leave, and with his foremost thought for the Society for which he had worked so hard. I might have seen him again, but I was also making an experiment in dying, and had to take care. But that last interview with Sydney Gimson will be a picture I will always carry with me. It will be with me, I expect and hope, when I follow him into the Great Silence.

I went down to Leicester with my mind full of a long friendship with one of nature's noblemen. I came home feeling that one more link with the past, my past, was broken, and for a time there was a feeling of a growing loneliness, that is only partly compensated by the younger lives in which I am still glad to say I find a very lively interest. But there came the reflection that

all that "Sydney Gimson" meant may still be with us, as it may be with the large numbers of men and women who knew him. All these will have felt his influence, and will be conscious of their debt to him. And beyond these are the much larger number who may never have known this name, but who will yet reap the benefit of his having lived. I count it as one of the privileges life has given me to have known him for so long.

Sydney Gimson died on November 3, at the age of 78. His body was cremated on Monday, November 7. The service was a silent one, but there was a Memorial meeting in the Secular Hall at which members of the family were present. Mr. Hassell presided, and was obviously affected at the loss of his beloved leader. I gave a brief address, and a speech from Mr. Scott brought the proceedings to a close.—C.C.

ADA GUNNING

We regret to announce the death of Ada Gunning, which took place in her 72nd year, on October 27, under distressing circumstances. Late of Newport, Mon., she and her husband decided to retire from domestic responsibilities and to settle in Bournemouth, but death intervened almost as soon as the new arrangements were completed. Staunch in her Freethought principles, warm-hearted and cheerful, she gathered a circle of devoted friends around her and retained their affection to the end. She was a member of the N.S.S. for many years and until her death. To her husband, T. H. Gunning, an old and esteemed member of the N.S.S., and other members of the family we offer sincere condolence in their great loss. The remains were cremated at the Bournemouth Crematorium on Tuesday, November 1, where before assembled relatives and friends a Secular Service was read.—R.H.R.

Sanity versus Fatuity

IN the one copy of a Sydney (N.S.W., Australia) daily paper that I have just been looking through are two items of a strangely contrasting character. One of them is a pronouncement regarding war by H. R. Knickerbocker, in *The Cosmopolitan* (America). He says:—

I have just rounded out fifteen years' experience as a foreign correspondent in Europe by covering the war in Asia, and the lesson which stands out above all others from the events of these years is:—

(1) That there are bad men in the world; (2) that bad men sometimes get a control of nations and make bad nations of them; and (3) that against bad nations decent nations can be protected only by force greater than the bad nations can exercise.

During these fifteen years I have seen men of good-will with no guns always beaten by men of ill-will with guns, and ill-armed nations that wanted peace subjugated by well-armed nations that wanted war.

I have never seen good-will, unsupported by force, win. These years have taught me that the only way to keep peace is to make it too dangerous for the would-be aggressor to make war. Bully nations, like individual bullies, gather strength and courage from any sign of their victims' weakness.

Must not the soundness of this statement compel its very general acceptance, particularly in the light of latter-day events? For a reverse sort of picture, pathetic in its fatuity, we must turn to the other item in the same paper—the same day. This is supplied by Earl Baldwin, who—speaking in the House of Lords on October 4—is reported to have declared that "the invitation from Hitler to the Conference at Munich came like an act of Divine intervention in response to the prayers of the nation." The report proceeds:—

Earl Baldwin described to the House how, last Wednesday, he had sat in the gallery of the Commons next to

the Foreign Secretary (Lord Halifax), while Mr. Chamberlain was making his speech.

"I do not believe," he said, "that there was any thought by anyone present but that war was inevitable. My mind went back to that day in August, 1914; and I have never forgotten Sir Edward Grey's face—the face of a man who looked as if he had been through hell; and I thought the skies were completely black.

"The prayers of the nation had been ascending night and day, not only in this country, but in other countries; and no answer had come.

"In the middle of the speech, the Foreign Secretary was handed a telegram, and he showed it to me. It was the answer—the expected answer—to the Prime Minister's appeal. It was just as if the finger of God had drawn a rainbow once more across the sky and had ratified again His Covenant with the children of men."

Thus, the direct implication is that the invitation from Hitler to the Conference at Munich was due to prayer. In other words, God had in this way been induced to save the world from war. The crudity of such a conception of the Deity needs very little stressing. Firstly, the reflection is that God—"the all-merciful, the all-loving"—is so aloof from the affairs of the world, that He has to be supplicated by His creatures before deigning to spare millions of them from mutilation and death.

Was it, we may ask next, that these appeals were not addressed to Him, in sufficient volume and fervour, that He did not similarly intervene when previous wars were threatening? For example, the war of 1914-18; or the Italian-Abyssinian War; or, for that matter, the wars now being waged in Spain and China. The credit-side and the debit-side must apply in this as in all other matters. Therefore, to credit the Almighty with coming to the rescue of humanity in the present instance is to debit Him with the failure to prevent the slaughter in all the other wars.

Of course, this argument is all developed on the preposterous assumption that there is any Divine intervention whatever—for good or for evil.

Irresistible is the temptation, in the flatulent reference by Earl Baldwin to the finger of God, to proceed a little further. Do the facts bear out the suggestion that the British prayers resulted in any particular British advantage? They emphatically do not. Hitler got practically, if not everything, he wanted. It was for this reason—not by any means because of the prayers that went up—that war was averted. If there was any sparing by the Almighty, let it be remembered, too, that Germany itself benefited in that respect in common with the rest of the world, in addition to Hitler getting off with the Czechoslovakian plunder. Everything, in short, was precisely as Hitler might desire it.

Hitler it was, then, for whom God must, first and foremost, have drawn a rainbow once more across the sky—to revert to Earl Baldwin's archaic, superstitious imagery. There remains, I think, a concrete conclusion as regards those who prate of the efficacy of prayer. This is that verily must Adolphe Hitler be a man after God's own heart.

FRANK HILL.

Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.

Fifty Years Ago

CARDINAL MANNING writes that "neither the Greek nor the Roman world had any true conception of a home." He forgets many a classic picture of home, from those of Andromache and Penelope to that imagined by the poet who was the friend of Augustus. Listen to Horace, in Sir Stephen De Vere's translation:—

But if a true and loving wife
Should share with me the toils of life,
Blythe as Apulia's sunburnt maid,
Or Sabine matron, mountain-bred,
Her husband's stay, her babe's delight,
Making a happy home more bright,
Upon the sacred hearth-stone burning
Old logs to greet her lord returning—

If wife like this should milk my ewes
Safe penned within the wattled close,
And draw fresh wine from cask of wood,
And crown the board with unbought food,—
How blest my life! I ask no more.

What a lovely picture is in those first eight lines! The Roman poet who drew it died before Christianity was born; yet, after the lapse of nearly two thousand years, a Christian apologist has the—let us say—*temerity* to assert that the Roman world was without "any true conception of a home."

The Freethinker, November 11, 1888.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON

OUTDOOR

KINGSTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place): 7.30, A Lecture. Weather permitting.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond): 11.30, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury. Parliament Hill Fields, 3.30, Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.30, Sunday, Mrs. N. Buxton, Messrs. Bryant, Tuson, Barnes, Collins and Tuson.

INDOOR

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Alexandra Hotel, South Side, Clapham Common, S.W.4): 7.30, Mr. P. Goldman (N.S.S.)—"Psycho-Analysis."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.30, Miss Marjorie Bowen—"The Religious Impulse in English Poetry."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. ("The Laurie Arms," Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, George Bedborough—"Penal Reform."

COUNTRY

INDOOR

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane): 7.0, J. V. Shortt (Liverpool)—"Magic and Medicine."

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Jubilee Assembly Hall, Market Street, Blackburn): 7.30, Monday, Mr. W. A. Atkinson (Manchester)—"God, the League and the Crisis."

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Laycock's Forum, Kirkgate): 7.15, Mr. A. E. Bevan—"The Nature of Communism."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. H. Horsfall, M.P.S.—"The Evolution of Reason."

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Free Gardeners' Hall, Picardy Place, Edinburgh): 7.0, Debate—"There is a Personal God." Mr. J. Grant, Glasgow (pro.). Mr. F. Smithies (con.).

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Mrs Ernest Brown (Scott. Anti-Vivis. Socy.)—"Ancient and Modern Medical Superstitions."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Chapman Cohen—"The New Science and the New God."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Islington, Liverpool, entrance in Christian Street): 7.0, Geoffrey Thompson (Liverpool)—"Freewill."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (King's Café, 64-66 Oxford Road, Manchester, near All Saints Church): 7.0, Mr. Geo. Taylor (Manchester)—"Will Materialism Explain Mind?"

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The Memorandum of Association sets forth that the Society's Objects are:—To promote the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action. To promote freedom of enquiry. To promote universal Secular Education. To promote the complete secularization of the State, etc. And to do all such lawful things as are conducive to such objects. Also to have, hold, receive, and retain any sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of the Society.

Members pay an entrance fee of ten shillings, and a subsequent yearly subscription of five shillings.

The liability of members is limited to £1, in case the Society should ever be wound up.

All who join the Society participate in the control of its business and the trusteeship of its resources. It is expressly provided in the Articles of Association that no member, as such, shall derive any sort of profit from the Society, either by way of dividend, bonus, or interest.

The Society's affairs are managed by an elected Board of Directors, one-third of whom retire (by ballot), each year, but are eligible for re-election.

Friends desiring to benefit the Society are invited to make donations, or to insert a bequest in the Society's favour in their wills. The now historic decision of the House of Lords in *re Bowman and Others v. the Secular Society Limited*, in 1917, a verbatim report of which may be obtained from its publishers, the Pioneer Press, or from the Secretary, makes it quite impossible to set aside such bequests.

A Form of Bequest.—The following is a sufficient form of bequest for insertion in the wills of testators:—

I give and bequeath to the Secular Society, Limited, the sum of £ free from Legacy Duty, and I direct that a receipt signed by two members of the Board of the said Society and the Secretary thereof shall be a good discharge to my Executors for the said Legacy.

It is advisable, but not necessary, that the Secretary should be formally notified of such bequests, as wills sometimes get lost or mislaid. A form of membership, with full particulars, will be sent on application to the Secretary, R. H. ROSETTI, 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

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