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*Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums,
Letters to the Editor, etc.*

Views and Opinions

Egypt and the Bible

It is now generally recognized that the essentials of the New Testament story of Jesus Christ may be found in pre-Christian religious belief. The Virgin Birth, the miraculous life, the ceremonial death, and the resurrection of Jesus, are all there for those who seek. So also are the ethical precepts that are put in the mouth of the incarnate god who stalks through the pages of the gospels. And apart from the mythological setting of these moral precepts a more scientific study of the social evolution of human society has made it quite clear that the best of New Testament moral maxims represent a precipitate of social life and experience. All the essentials of morality, wherever found, are exhibited in practice long before they are expressed in teaching. The idea that men had to wait for a divine revelation to discover truths upon which the coherence of the human group depends for its existence, is a striking illustration of the inability of the Christian Church to understand the nature of morality.

But what is not quite so well-known is that the same general truth is true of the Old Testament. An understanding of the Egyptian mythology is of comparatively recent growth, as is the reading of the Egyptian hieroglyphics. To-day much valuable information on this head is open to all; and with regard to the origins of the teaching of both the old and the New Testament, it is difficult not to believe that this information, which is accessible to ordinary men and women, is not within the knowledge of those Christian preachers who claim to have made a detailed study of religion and of biblical origins. A loosely organized conspiracy would be no unjust description of the present generation of Christian teachers.

* * *

Myth and History

Hardly anyone with the slightest pretence to scholarship dare deny the pre-Christian origin of most of the Old Testament stories. The story of creation,

the flood, the origin of languages, are all there in Egyptian, Babylonian or other mythologies long before there was a word of the Old Testament written. The temptation of Joseph by Potiphar's wife is the old Egyptian story of "The Two Brothers." The legend of the Noachian Deluge is unmistakably Babylonian. The creation of the first man has its parallel in Egypt, and there is plenty of evidence that Egyptian culture, or a rather degraded form of it, was operative in Palestine before the settlement of the Jews there. But I am not now concerned with the fact of the transmission, through the Bible, of Babylonian, Phœnician and Egyptian mythology, since there are not many first-rate scholars who doubt it. The ground now taken up by champions of the Bible is the debt the world owes the Bible by the enunciation of a lofty moral teaching, and a lifting of religion from a definitely fetishistic level to a high ethical one. Only the other Sunday I listened to a B.B.C. religious talk on the Bible, and in addition to the moral plea, there was added the familiar statement that the world owed the idea of the unity of God to the Bible—although why the belief in one God is "higher" than the belief in a dozen is more than I have ever been able to understand. I see no greater difference in believing in one God and believing in a number, than there is in believing in ghosts confined to a particular locality and ghosts scattered all over the landscape.

But even this is not true. Those who will consult present-day authoritative works on Egypt will find not only the belief in a supreme deity well established in Egypt, long before the Bible is held to have been written, but in an even more striking form than there is in the Bible. To justify what has been said I am taking a number of passages from that fine work by the Egyptologist, J. H. Breasted, *The Dawn of Conscience*, published in 1934. I take his citations from an Egyptian sage (Amenemope, tenth century B.C.), with their parallels from the Old Testament Book of Proverbs:—

PROVERBS

Incline thine ear and hear the words of the wise,
And apply thine heart unto my knowledge.
For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee
But woe to him who transgresses.

AMENEMOPE

Incline thine ear to hear my saying,
And apply thine heart to their comprehension.
For it is a profitable thing to put in thy heart
But woe to him who transgresses them.

PROVERBS

Remove not the old landmark;
And enter not into the fields of the fatherless.

AMENEMOPE

Remove not the landmark on the boundary of the fields,
Be not greedy for a cubit of land
And trespass not on the boundary of the widow.

PROVERBS

Weary not thyself to be rich.
Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not?
For riches certainly make themselves wings;
Like an eagle that flieth toward heaven.

AMENEMOPE

Weary not thyself to seek for more
When thy need is already secured.
If riches be brought to thee by robbery
They will not abide the night with thee
When the morning cometh they are no longer in thy
house
They have made themselves wings like geese
And they have flown to heaven.

PROVERBS

Better is little with the fear of the Lord,
Than great treasure and trouble therewith.
Better is a dinner of herbs where love is,
Than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.

AMENEMOPE

Better is poverty in the hand of God
Than riches in the storehouse.
Better are loaves when the heart is joyous
Than riches in unhappiness.

PROVERBS

Make no friendship with a man that is given to anger;
And with a wrathful man thou shalt not go:

AMENEMOPE

Fraternize not with the hot-tempered man
And press not upon him for conversation.

PROVERBS

Say not thou, I will recompense evil;
Wait on the Lord, and he shall save thee.

AMENEMOPE

Say not "I have found a protector."
Set thyself in the arms of God
Until thy silence overthroweth them.

PROVERBS

A man skilful in his business
He shall stand before Kings.

AMENEMOPE

A scribe skilful in his office
He shall find himself worthy of being a courtier.

PROVERBS

Have I not written to thee
Excellent things in counsels and knowledge.

AMENEMOPE

Consider for thyself these thirty chapters
That they are satisfaction and instruction.

PROVERBS

The rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the
maker of them all.

AMENEMOPE

I have made the great waters that the pauper like the
Lord may have the use of them.

PROVERBS

Say not thou I will recompense evil;
Wait on the Lord, and he shall save thee.

AMENEMOPE

Say not I have found a protector,
Now I can attack the hated man.
Set thyself in the arms of God
Until thy silence overthroweth them (his enemies).

There are numerous other parts of the old Bible
which make their Egyptian origin unmistakable. It
is impossible, for example, for anyone to miss seeing
the biblical tone of the following which is taken from
one of the old Theban hymns:—

How manifold are thy works!
They are hidden before men
O, sole God, besides whom there is no other
Thou didst create the earth according to thy heart
In wisdom thou hast made them all.
The earth is full of thy riches.

Compare with this from the Psalms (104-24):—

Oh Lord how manifold are thy works!
In wisdom thou hast made them all.
The earth is full of thy riches.

A great many other illustrations might be given,
not merely of the existence in ancient Egypt of that
rationalizing and humanizing spirit that sooner or
later attacks all religions, but also the extent to which
the Bible is indebted to Egyptian sources. This is not
always an exact copy, sometimes it amounts to no
more than a degraded form of the best of Egypt's reli-
gious teachings. And, in my judgment, just as the
religion of the Hebrews was often a retrogression
from the higher forms of the Egyptian religion, so
Christianity carried the process back a step nearer the
lower forms of primitive culture. And, judging from
the evidence given here, and remembering the devel-
oped form of the Trinity, the Virgin Birth, the Sacri-
fice of the God-man, and the resurrection from the
dead, the opinion of Gerald Massey expressed in the
formula that Africa was the birth-place of religion
with Egypt as its mouthpiece, is an important truth,
without its being *all* the truth. Those who have read
the pamphlet, published by the Pioneer Press, *The
Historical Jesus and the Mythical Christ* will know
how many are the analogies between Christian doc-
trines and the ancient Egyptian mythology. I end
with the following from Breasted:—

Until our own generation the peoples of the West
have left almost unnoticed the profoundly important
fact that both in Egypt and Babylonia civilization
had culminated, and was on the decline before
Hebrew civilization had arisen. We are all aware
that Egypto-Babylonian culture set European civil-
ization going; but few modern people have observed
the fact, so important in the history of morals and reli-
gion, that Egypto-Babylonian culture also set Heb-
rew civilization going. Later a current of which
Christianity is the most noticeable, continuing to set
towards Europe, eventually transformed the Roman
State at Constantinople into an oriental despotism,
and continued to be felt until long after the Crusades.

And again:—

Had the Western World never lost all knowledge of the origins and development of civilization, it would never have occurred to anyone to place Hebrew history anywhere else than as the culmination of a long preceding development of morals and religion. Certainly no theological doctrine of one people exclusively enjoying a divine revelation could ever have arisen—a doctrine which has blinded us for centuries to our noble inheritance of universal human aspiration, not limited to the history of the experience of any one people.

CHAPMAN COHEN

This Sacred Caste!

Reverend; worthy of reverence; entitled to respect, mingled with fear and affection; a title of respect given to the clergy generally; "very reverend" being applied to a dean, "right reverend" to a bishop, and most reverend to an archbishop.—*Nuttall's Dictionary*.

How clever are the clergy in keeping a tight grip on education. By instilling their dogmas and their legends on children during the most impressionable period of life they bias pupils, who, later on, are almost incapable of criticism. So deep has the wool been drawn over the young eyes, that it requires much thought and reading to escape from the thralldom of Priestcraft. For close on a decade the pupils have been taught that the Christian fetish-book is literally true, that inquiry is sinful, and that the clergy are sacred folk, a caste apart from their fellows, and that Freethinkers are the most wicked of the human race, worse even than murderers.

Priests draw the wool over the eyes of adults as well as children. Realizing that parts of their ancient Scriptures are out of harmony with twentieth-century culture, they omit censurable verses when reading publicly from their Bible, and have even amended their "Book of Common Prayer" to the same end. The Roman Catholics go so far as to regulate the reading of their members, and it is sober fact that the Romish "Index Expurgatorius" of forbidden books contains the works of almost every author of great repute. The result is that the average Catholic has even less acquaintance with advanced thought than his Protestant rival, although the pastors and masters of all the sects treat science with high-sniffing contempt, and use reason to deride reason.

Seeing that the clergy exercise such mischievous influence on national education, it is worth while to ascertain what the clerical profession is in reality. There are about forty thousand men in this country who bear the title of "reverend," wear a distinctive dress, and form a sacred caste apart from their fellow men. Who are they? What do they do to entitle them to be revered? In what way are they different from other men who are simple "misters"? These are plain questions which require a straightforward answer.

It is contended by apologists for the clergy that this reverence is paid to these men because they have chosen as their business the supervision and direction of the religious habits of their fellow countrymen. In reality, behind the needlework of Noddledom, they are simply modern medicine men engaged in similar work to their coloured prototypes in uncivilized countries. They tell us of gods who get angry with us; of a very dreadful devil who must be guarded against; of angels who fly from heaven to earth; of saints who can assist if supplicated. Forty thousand men are engaged in this sorry business, to say nothing of their very numerous assistants and satellites. This

state of affairs, be it remembered, not only in the South-Sea Islands, but also in a country pretending to be in the very van of civilization and culture! And the clerical profession is as honest as fortune-telling, but not more so. Many a poor old woman has been sent to prison for taking money from a servant-girl, after promising her a handsome husband and four children, but the clergy are allowed to take all they can get for promises of good fortune in "the beautiful land above."

These "reverend gentlemen" have a good time on earth. They are not crucified. The average "reverend" enjoys a comfortable livelihood, and lives in a nice house, usually a little larger than his neighbours. He has just as much, or as little, work as he likes to do, and if he chooses to spend three fourths of each day reading or visiting, there is no one to say him nay. He can count on invitations to dinner and other hospitality all the year round, which is no small saving in the household expenses, and he can count on a month's holiday in the summer. And the higher ecclesiastics have a far better time than ordinary clergymen. Forty of the bishops alone share £182,700 yearly, including the bachelor Bishop of London, who follows the "Carpenter of Nazareth" on a modest salary of £200 weekly, a sum sufficient to keep forty ordinary families in comfort.

As little merit attaches to the clerical profession itself, are we to assume that reverence is due to the exemplary lives led by those belonging to this specially favoured class of the community? Divorce Court proceedings and Police-Court records show that the priestly character differs in no way from any other class. They may retort that there are black sheep in every fold. True, but doctors, architects, dentists, bankers, and other professional men, do not pretend to be a sacred caste apart. They do not wear a special dress, and ask to be known as "reverend," or "right-reverend," or "very reverend," or any other title implying special respect. It is because the clergy "put on airs" that we compare their behaviour with their boasting. When they decide to come down from their pedestals we will make the same allowance for them that we make for ordinary people.

It appears also that many of the clergy are perjurers. Many thousands of them subscribe to the "Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion." These articles are hopelessly out of date. They include the belief that a spirit can be at the same time a father and a son, and also proceed from itself as a ghost; that "Adam" was the father of the human race; and that the first woman was made from a man's rib; that "Adam" and "Eve" ate fruit, in consequence of which the human race is damned to everlasting torment; that Roman Catholic doctrine is a mere invention; that the Christian Bible is the word of "God," and that the monarch is the head of Christ's Church. To these articles of faith, among others, every Church of England minister subscribes solemnly. And we know that numbers of them do not believe in them, or observe them, and that the main reason for remaining in the Church is "purple, palaces, patronage, profit, and power." There is more hypocrisy to come. Despite the bluff that priests are selected by the "Holy Spirit," the right to appoint parsons to benefices is sold for money in the open market, as if it were so much coal or a quack medicine. Is it not a curious profession?

The Anglican Church has many representatives in the House of Lords, some being "right-reverend," and others "most-reverend." The vote of these sacrosanct, lawn-sleeved ecclesiastics is a most ironic and bitter comment on their priestly pretensions, and shows how far removed from democratic ideals is the wealthiest and most powerful Christian Church in this

country. Bishops voted against admitting Nonconformists to the Universities, and against removing the civil disabilities of Catholics, Jews, and Freethinkers. Bishops opposed the introduction of free education, and voted against admitting women as members of London Borough Councils. None voted for the abolition of flogging women in public, beating women in prison, and use of the lash in the Army and Navy. Bishops opposed the provision of seats for tired shop-assistants. Scores of measures for the bettering of the condition of the working-classes have been opposed by these "Fathers-in-God," and the plain, unvarnished record carries its own worst condemnation. Indeed, this so-called Church of England, which for many generations included a service for "King Charles the Martyr" in its Book of Common Prayer, never had any real affection for the masses of the people, and one day, which may not be so far distant, the masses of the people may return the compliment with interest. For, in the final analysis, this precious sacred caste is but the old, familiar abracadabra racket, by means of which men have been fooled and exploited for so many centuries. Because these men have been in authority so long is the real reason why Europe is semi-barbarous at the present hour.

Though men abase them before you in spirit, and men's knees bend;

We kneel not, neither adore you, but standing, look to the end.

MIMNERMUS

"Paine's Drift"

EVELYN, the Diarist, praised the "pretty landscape" of Thetford, the Norfolk small town where Thomas Paine was born. Remote from main roads, the town has changed far less than many of "England's green and pleasant lands," through the years of devastating coach, rail and motor traffic.

Thetford is, however, easy enough to reach by rail or road to-day. Good hotels, mostly ancient, and some passable restaurants obviate inconvenience to the ordinary traveller, who will see a charming and mainly unspoiled district, a picturesque river, and much pleasing scenery of meadow and hillside.

Beside the Paine associations, there is no lack of historical relics. Chiefly characteristic is the ancient Tumulus—a high mound of uncertain lineage, in the heart of the city. In A.D. 870 the Danes occupied the spot, and when attacked there the victorious Danes slew the English leader, Edmund, the so-called "King and Martyr."

That Thomas Paine was born there is now attested on a well-designed and easily read memorial-stone placed by the Corporation of Thetford in the middle of the road—believe it or not—on the Belisha road-light island. "Thomas Paine was born close by," says the stone, which gives the dates of his birth and death. "Close by"! But exactly where?

In his valuable and practically faultless *Life of Paine*, Mr. Moncure Conway says:—

Thomas Paine was born January 29, 1736-7, at Thetford. The house was in Bridge Street, now White Hart, and has recently made way for a pretty garden and fountain. (Putnam's Edition: 1892, Vol. I, p. 3; Watts's Edition, 1909, p. 2.)

About thirty years ago, I visited a house where Thomas Paine was born. Last year, 1938, once more I visited the same house, and again stood in a bedroom which I have every reason to believe was the actual scene of Paine's birth.

Paine was born, as Conway says, in White Hart Street, then known as Bridge Street. Paine's birth-

place probably had a front garden with a gate opening on to Bridge Street—the main street of Thetford. This garden may have been—when Conway saw it—the scene of a fountain, etc. Whatever the obstruction may have been between the main street and the Paine dwelling at that time and earlier, it has for many years been built over. At present there is a country "shop" occupied by an Auctioneer and Furniture Dealer. The entrance to this shop is in the main street.

But this shop, while it shuts out the view to and from White Hart Street and the Paine house, may be only an additional building. On the other hand it is conceivable that the shop and the house were both parts of the Paine house once upon a time. Apparently in any case the dwelling-house once occupied by the Paines still stands. It is now reached by a new rural side-street, officially named

PAINE'S DRIFT

Mr. George R. Blaydon, the courteous Town Clerk of Thetford, permits me to use his name as my authority for what I have said. Mr. Blaydon has no doubt as to the genuineness of the still-standing house as the birth-place of Thomas Paine. Mr. Blaydon added that he would always be happy to help with information any visitor interested in this question. He will arrange with the tenant of the Paine house for the admission of visitors on receiving notice beforehand.

Mr. Robert Angell (a Hunstanton Freethinker) shared with me the pleasure of Mr. Blaydon's personal guidance to many valuable Paine memorials, relics and associations. We saw the Grammar School where the boy Thomas was educated. Externally it is as it was in Paine's school-days. The old Friends' Meeting House where Paine and his parents sought the "Inner Light" was being demolished thirty years ago—indeed I was a witness to its destruction. The fourth wall still stands. The whole site, suitably "labelled," has been purchased by the Corporation, the Meeting House is made into a Garden, and—is always open to visitors (it is close to the Town Hall).

The Town Hall itself houses a large number of portraits of Paine. There is also now a Town Museum (an "Old House" in White Hart Street) where souvenirs of Paine may be seen, including a good collection of Paine's works and books about him.

"Tom Paine is not forgotten," said a Thetford official to me. He, like many Paine "worshippers," would have been surprised to hear protests against the use of the familiar diminutive "Tom." At Lewes, where Paine married and lived, his house and shop still remain. In Lewes, Paine is still called "Tom." By sheer coincidence the "White Hart"—situated close to the Paine's house in Lewes High Street—was the scene of Paine's earliest oratory.

Paine was ordinarily called by friend and foe "Mr. Paine"—sometimes, of course, "Deputy Paine." Thomas Paine was the name which he himself made into a never-ending scourge for superstition. It was, however, Paine's most popular following who called him Tom. I have met hosts of Americans who still call Ingersoll, Bob. It was Bradlaugh's Northampton enthusiasts who voted again and again for "Charlie Bradlaugh." Those who call the greatest of Scotland's poets "Rabbie Burns" are certainly not his enemies. It was left to an unbeliever—at any rate an Agnostic—Sir Leslie Stephen—to perpetrate the absurd slander on millions of Paine's followers—including men who went to prison over and over again to attest the reality of their devotion—that they called Paine, by the affectionate nick-name "Tom Paine"—because they hated him! Stephen's words are:—

Good Englishmen expressed their disgust for the irreverent infidel by calling him Tom, and the name still warns all men that its proprietor does not

deserve even posthumous civility. (*History of Thought in the Eighteenth Century.*)

Two Irish songs of Paine's day are quoted by Mary Best in her biography of Paine. One called, *Rights of Man*, began its last verse, "To conclude, here's success to Honest Tom Paine," and another called, *Common Sense*, in appreciation of Paine's other book, said:—

To be sure a great rogue is Tom Paine,
But you'll never hear Paddy complain.

Of course Sir Leslie Stephen would have insisted on "Paddy" being corrected to "Saint Patrick."

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH

Of Ceremony

The world is still deceived with ornament.

(*Merchant of Venice*, iii. 2.)

And what art thou, thou idol ceremony?

(*King Henry v.* 1.)

"ALONE among the towns of Scotland, Jedburgh," says its official guide, "continues to celebrate the coming of Candlemas by the playing of the *ba'*; and at Fastern's E'en 'Jethart Ba' possesses pride of place among the contests amicably played at various places on the Borders. The game at Fastern's E'en is not always played on Shrove Tuesday, for Jedburgh does not fix its festival by the Ecclesiastical Calendar, which holds a specially created "Paschal Moon," but by this old saying:—

First comes Candlemas, then the new mune,
The next Tuesday after is Fastern's E'en.

"The origin of the game is believed to go back to pre-reformation times. A gruesome legend, which has come down from the days when Border Feuds were bitter, and cruel reprisals were an every-day occurrence, indicates that the custom had its beginnings after a fierce fight between companies of Scots and English at Fernieherst Castle. On that occasion, so tradition has it, the Border Scots celebrated their victory by playing football with the severed heads of the slain Englishmen."

Earth-bound creatures like the Jethart folk speak disparagingly of the old Jewish Moon, but she has remained, nevertheless, inconstantly constant.

Christ rose from the dead on the first Sunday after the full moon on the 21st of March, and he has kept on doing so ever since! If the full moon happens upon a Sunday, he must follow instructions given in the Prayer Book, and rise on the Sunday following. This arrangement with the Full Moon has been faithfully observed. But Christ's risings have been severely limited. His earliest appearance can be made only on March 22, and his latest on April 25. The Jethart folk would have reverently accepted the "Paschal Moon" if they had read their scriptures: "Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them." (*Isaiah i.* 14.)

Our faulty almanac blames the moon for not agreeing with it. As well blame the law of gravity! The Prayer Book, however, makes good the difference and reconciles the two, thus: the date of the Paschal Full Moon of any year can be found by treating the current year, for example: $1938 + 1 \div 19 = 102$, and 1 fraction over, this fraction 1 is to be taken as the Golden Number, opposite which the date, April 14, is given as that of the Full Moon. And this remainder must be treated reverently, and not on any account be referred to as a "vulgar fraction"! Why these figures are so

used is explained by the paschal cycle—the cycle by which the date of Easter is ascertained. It is formed by multiplying together the cycle of the Sun (28 years) and that of the moon (19 years). The foregoing calculations must be familiar to all—Think of a number, add one, double it, deduct three and so on. The Medicine Man ages ago was three in one, priest, conjuror, doctor, and much confusion has resulted from the breaking up of this Trinity.

The origin of Candlemas festival may be explained by a quotation from a sermon of Pope Innocent:—

Why do we in this feast carry candles? Because the gentiles dedicated the month of February to the infernal gods, and as at the beginning of it, Pluto stole Proserpine, and her mother, Ceres, sought her in the night with lighted candles. So they at the beginning of this month, walked about the city with lighted candles; because the holy fathers could not utterly extirpate this custom, they ordained that Christians should carry about candles in honour of the blessed Virgin Mary: and thus what was done before to the honour of Ceres is now done to the honour of the Virgin (*Pagano Papismus*). According to *The Posey of Prayers, or The Key to Heaven*, the feast of Candlemas was so named, because before mass is said this day, the Church *blesses her candles for the whole year*, and makes a procession with hallowed or blessed candles in the hands of the faithful. (*Hone.*)

"Many of such ceremonies," says the Anglican Prayer Book, "at the first were of godly intent and purpose devised, and yet at length turned to vanity and superstition: some entered into the Church by indiscreet devotion, and such a zeal as was without knowledge; they were winked at in the beginning and grew daily to more and more abuses; and because they have much blinded the people, and obscured the glory of God are worthy to be cut away and clean rejected. . . . Ceremonies were so much abused," the Prayer Book continues, "partly by the superstitious blindness of the rude and unlearned, and partly by the insatiable avarice of such as sought more their own lucre than the glory of God, that the abuses could not well be taken away. . . . The ceremonies to be retained were such as were apt to "stir up the dull mind of man to most perfect and godly living without error or superstition."

The above writer, in short, thought that the ceremonies favoured by Roman Catholics should be rejected, and those approved by Anglicans retained.

Ceremonies interested Dr. Tylor from a scientific point of view only. He traced "the threads of continuity which connect the faiths of the lower with the faiths of the higher world"; and he shows "how hardly the civilized man can understand the religious rites even of his own land, without knowledge of the meaning, often the widely unlike meaning, which they bore to men of distant ages and countries, representatives of grades of culture far different from his. (*Primitive Culture*, Vol. II., xviii).

Later on he tells us that: "the Historian and the Ethnographer must be called upon to show the hereditary standing of each opinion and practice, and their enquiry must go back as far as antiquity or savagery can show a vestige, for there seems no human thought so primitive as to have lost its bearing on our own thought, nor so ancient as to have broken its connexion with our own life (*Ibid* cxix).

Then he show us what an all-important part language plays in this, and all our studies:—

When it is considered how far the development of knowledge depends on full and exact means of expressing thought, is it not a pregnant consideration that the language of civilized men is but the language of savages, more or less improved in structure, a good deal extended in vocabulary, made more precise in the dictionary definition of words? The development

of language between its savage and cultured stages has been made in its details, scarcely in its principle. It is not too much to say that half the vast defect of language as a method of utterance, and half the vast defect of thought as determined by the influence of language, are due to the fact that speech is a scheme worked out by the rough and ready application of material metaphor and imperfect analogy, in many ways fitting rather the barbaric education of those who formed it, than their own. Language is one of those intellectual departments in which we have gone too little beyond the savage stage, but are still as it were hacking with stone celts and twirling laborious friction-fire. (*Ibid.*)

Proceeding along these lines superstition takes a back seat, and the trend of things becomes apparent :—

If for example we will but candidly compare the educated opinion of Rome in the fifth century with that of London in the nineteenth century; on such subjects as the nature and functions of soul, spirit, deity, and judge by the comparison in what important respects the philosophy of religion has come to differ even among men who represent in different ages the same great principles of faith. The general study of the ethnography of religion, through all its immensity of range, seems to countenance the theory of evolution in its highest and widest sense. (*Ibid.*)

Ceremonies may be said to be the principal properties of the Roman Catholic Church. As such Tylor seems to have regarded them. "Rites," he says, "are expressive and symbolic performances, the dramatic utterance of religious thought, the gesture-language of theology" (*Ibid.*)

Further :—

The Roman Catholic scheme, a system so interesting to the ethnologist for its maintenance of rites more naturally belonging to barbaric culture; a system so hateful to the man of science for its suppression of knowledge, and for that usurpation of intellectual authority by a sacerdotal caste which has at last reached its climax, now that an aged bishop can judge, by infallible inspiration, the results of researches whose evidence and methods are alike beyond his knowledge and his mental grasp. (*Ibid.*)

Finally, the duty to expose the remains of this crude old culture, and progress, remove hindrances and become the pioneers of the science of culture, he makes plain to everyone with ears to hear :—

To expose the remains of crude old culture, which have passed into harmful superstition, and to mark these out for destruction, may seem a harsh task, and at times even painful. Yet this work, if less genial is not less urgently needful for the good of mankind. Thus active at once in aiding progress and removing hindrances, the science of culture is essentially a reformer's science. (*Ibid.*)

GEORGE WALLACE

God's in His Heaven

Has indignation passed meridian point
That honour sells so cheap in common mart?
What ranting priestly salve can now anoint
And ease uneasy conscience's grim smart?

The evil that men do to us is keen,
But not so keen as that we do ourselves;
We think too late, alas, when shelves are clean,
And not at all when villains load the shelves.

Amusements make first claim on work-drugged minds,
Advertisements then sap the weakened store,
And furrowed care that all too seldom finds
That nothing is increasing most with more.

We pray, and pass the buck to God. 'Tis fair,
For God will pass the buck to God knows where.

H. DRAKE.

A Polish Martyr

CASIMIR LISZINSKI, or Lyszczynski, was the last person known to have been judicially put to death in Europe on a charge of Atheism. About his case there has been some controversy, and still remains some little mystery. Certain it is that he was cited for Atheism by the Bishops of Kioff and Posen, found guilty of that charge, excommunicated, and condemned to be burnt alive. By grace of the King he was decapitated before being burnt. His execution took place at Grodno, March 30, 1689. After being burnt, his ashes were placed into a cannon and scattered to the four winds, an emblem, shall we say, of the spread of Atheistic doctrines. Whether Liszinski was really an Atheistic martyr or merely a victim of religious intolerance there is some doubt. Count Valerian Krasinski, in his *Sketch of the Religious History of the Slavonic Nations*, Edinburgh, 1851, pp. 224 and 225, thus relates the occurrence :—

The other crime which disgraced that period was the judicial murder of Casimir Lyszczynski, a respectable landowner, perpetrated by the clergy in spite of Sobieski's efforts to save that innocent victim of fanaticism; an event which is described by all the historians of John Sobieski, and deserves a particular notice. Lyszczynski was perusing a book entitled *Theologia Naturalis*, by Henry Alsted, a Protestant divine; and finding that the arguments which the author employed to prove the existence of the Deity were so confused that it was possible to deduce from them quite contrary consequences, he added on the margin the following words: *Ergo, non est Deus*,—evidently ridiculing the arguments of the author. This circumstance was found out by a debtor of Lyszczynski, called Brzoska, who denounced him as an Atheist, delivering, as the evidence of his accusation, a copy of the work, with the above-mentioned annotation, to Witwicki, bishop of Posen, who took up the affair with the greatest keenness. He was zealously seconded by Zaluski, Bishop of Kioff, a prelate known for his great learning, and not devoid of merit in other respects, which however proved no check against religious fanaticism. The King, who was very far from countenancing such enormities, attempted to save Lyszczynski, by ordering that, being a Lithuanian, he should be judged at Vilna; but nothing could shelter the unfortunate man against the fanatical rage of the two bishops; and the great privilege of a Polish noble, that he could not be imprisoned before his condemnation, and which heretofore was sacredly observed, even with great criminals—was violated. On the simple accusation of his debtor, supported by two bishops, the affair was brought before the Diet of 1689, before which the clergy, but particularly Bishop Zaluski, accused Lyszczynski of having denied the existence of God, and uttered blasphemies against the holy virgin and the saints. The unfortunate victim, horrified by his perilous position, acknowledged all that was imputed to him, made a full recantation of what he might have said or written against the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church, and declared his entire submission to its authority. This was, however, of no avail to him; and the Diet, instigated by the blasphemous representations of the clergy, decreed that Lyszczynski should have his tongue pulled out, be beheaded, and then burnt. This atrocious sentence was executed; and Zaluski himself gives a relation of what he considered an act of piety and justice. The king was horror-struck at this news, and exclaimed that the Inquisition could not do anything worse.

It must, however, be borne in mind that Count Krasinski was a Protestant, anxious to show the abuse made of their power by the Roman clergy in Poland, and to minimize the offences of their victims. It appears, moreover, from Bayle that he has by no means given the full particulars of the charge against Liszinski.

ski. According to his own defence, his only crime was having made a compilation of arguments for Atheism in order to refute them, and having written in the margin of a theological work that the arguments were inconclusive. Unfortunately for Liszinski, he had compiled the arguments for Atheism without proceeding with the second part of the work, in which they were to be confuted. Moreover, definite statements were cited against him from his own writings as that "Man is the creator of God, whom he had formed out of nothing." This statement, going as it does to the core of the question, certainly looks more like a confutation of the usual theistic position, than something set down in order to be answered.

It is easy to see how any man when such compromising and, in the eyes of bigots, dangerous statements were found among his papers, in an age when the penalty for Atheism was an agonizing death, would endeavour to give such a turn to them as that they were simply noted down in order to be confuted. But in that case, in such an age, it was a most dangerous practice to compile arguments for Atheism and not at the very same time set down their confutation, or at least a personal disclaimer of holding them. Nor is it easy to see that the Polish Diet would, even if the Bishops took up the case on such flimsy evidence as Krasinski alleges, have proceeded to pass so cruel a sentence, in opposition to the known wishes of the King, if they had any faith whatever in Liszinski's defence; or that Bishop Zaluski would have triumphed in the execution as "an act of piety and justice" unless he had really believed that Liszinski was an Atheist, for whom of course no punishment could be too bad. It is, perhaps, true that Liszinski may have drawn religious bigotry on himself as being connected with a family which had not only supported Protestantism, but Anti-Trinitarianism in Poland; but I think this will not alone account for the judicial horror of his execution. Taking all things into consideration, I see no reason to regret the insertion of the name of Casimir Liszinski in my *Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers*. His history forms a striking comment on Christian toleration, and has a separate place as the last case of capital punishment for Atheism.

(Reprinted) J. M. WHEELER

To prevent the religions from continuing to hamper, by false teaching and a false method, the intellectual and moral development of populations which have outgrown them, and to replace the religious method by other, more effective means of life, is one of the urgent problems before civilized humanity.—*Prof J. H. Leuba.*

With my latest breath will I bear my testimony against giving up to Infidels one great proof of the invisible world; I mean that of witchcraft and apparitions, confirmed by the testimony of all ages. The English in general, and indeed most of the men of learning in Europe, have given up all accounts of witches and apparitions as mere old wives' fables. I am sorry for it, and I willingly take this opportunity of entering my solemn protest against this violent compliment, which so many that believe the Bible pay to those who do not believe it. I owe them no such service. I take knowledge, these are at the bottom of the outcry which has been raised and with such insolence spread through the nation, in direct opposition not only to the Bible, but to the suffrage of the wisest and best of men in all ages and nations. They well know (whether Christians know it or not) that the giving up witchcraft is, in fact, giving up the Bible; and they know, on the other hand, that if but one account of the intercourse of men with separate spirits be admitted—their whole castle in the air—Deism, Theism, Materialism—falls to the ground.—*John Wesley.*

Acid Drops

General Gambaro, the officer in command of the Italian Army in Spain, reported to Mussolini that it was his troops that won the battle for Barcelona. Mussolini has publicly thanked Gambaro for the "Italian Victory" in Spain, and the Italian public was ordered publicly to rejoice in adding Spain to Abyssinia. We do not dispute the extent to which the "Conquest of Spain" is due to Italian help, but we think common decency should have demanded some recognition of the extent to which the Baldwin and Chamberlain Governments helped, by denying the rights of the Spanish Government to buy freely arms and food from this country. The extent also to which these Governments restrained their feelings when trading-ships flying the British flag, were bombed and sunk by German and Italian planes surely demanded some expression of gratitude. But in politics gratitude does not exist.

Italy, it must be noted, looks like being "appeased" with control of Spain. Thus, the *Church Times* :—

Adolf Hitler is to-day a greater power in Europe than any single man since Napoleon. The little corporal from Corsica has, as his successor, the little corporal from Vienna. At Munich he told the representatives of the great democracies his terms for keeping the peace, and with a proper realization of the horrors of modern war, his terms were accepted. Munich made him the dictator of Central Europe, but it did not make him secure. To obtain essential supplies he must terrorize the countries of south-eastern Europe into agreement to sell to Germany what Germany needs at Germany's terms. To make this terrorism effective there must be a continued increase in Germany's military strength, and such demonstrations of that strength, as are being planned for next month's manoeuvres.

The heroic resistance of the Spanish people could not stay the attack of General Franco's hordes of Italians, Germans and Moors, and, remembering what has happened before, the British Government has thought it necessary to express the earnest hope that General Franco will refrain from "acts of vengeance" when his mercenaries enter the city. The fact that expression of hope is necessary supplies an ironic comment on the confidence of the *Universe*, which says: "We are fully satisfied that General Franco's victory will restore freedom and order in Spain, and that he has no vindictive intentions towards the provinces which are still under Red rule." The *Universe* has a faith that would remove a regiment of mountains! One thing at least is quite certain. The Spanish people will have been conquered mainly by Italian conscripts.

The *Universe*, as was shown during the agitation against the Congress of the World Union of Freethinkers, will swear to anything when and where the interests of the Catholic Church is concerned.

It must always be remembered that in all the States surrounding Germany careful lists are kept of those who opposed Hitlerism. Then as Hitler—as the policy of appeasement develops—takes in more and more territory, these recalcitrants are charged with treason to the Reich, as were prominent Austrians and Czechs, even though their offence was committed years ago. This is an instrument of terrorism which has gained much strength through appeasement. What a pity Æsop did not think of that blessed word. The fable of the wolf and the lamb might have been written with a different terminology.

Munich guaranteed the independence of Czechoslovakia—and Hitler was "appeased" by making the Republic part of the greater Germany. Now the *News-Chronicle* announces that those of the refugees for whom Germany asks shall be handed over because they committed the unforgivable offence of opposing Hitler. Their future is execution, or the concentration camp. For their sake we hope that the former will be the sentence. Living may be purchased at too high a price.

The recent Exhibition of Scottish Art has been criticized from various angles. One religious weekly grumbles because it is lacking in religious pictures, only two being shown. The two are not particularly pious: one is Noel Paton's famous portrait of Luther in monk's habiliments—with skull, crucifix and hour glass. The other is a fine group (by Lorimer) of six dour Elders of the kirk with their "meenister." Most obviously the selection of pictures aimed at offering samples of Scottish Art, not illustrations to a Pictorial Bible.

The Bishop of Southwark airs a very popular stupidity when he says, "God has given us liberty to disobey him. We are not automatic toys; we are living people endowed with the freedom of choice." Maybe God did not make us, maybe he did give us freedom of choice; but in any case he badly bungled the job. Why did he not give us the right amount of judgment so that we might choose the right instead of the wrong? Perhaps he would reply that if God had done this there would have been no room for the Christian Church, and in that we are inclined to agree with him. After all the Christian Church has made it very plain that it is built upon the "badness" of man, not on his "goodness." If God had made men "good" from the outset, and if they had continued to be so, the Christian Church would never have been heard of.

It is a moot question whether animals have souls or not. It is true that St. Paul asks contemptuously "Doth God care for oxen," but it is also true that St. Francis is said to have been very kindly disposed to birds and animals generally. Moreover, there is one circumstance in the Bible when a jackass was able to detect the presence of a heavenly visitor that was quite invisible to a human being. And it will be remembered that one of the early appearances in public of Jesus was on the back of an ass, and those who are fond of symbology and prophecy may see in this foreshadowing of a type to which the Christian would strongly appeal, and on which it would also ride in ages to come. St. Antony of Padua preached to fishes, and "shoals of both little and great fish thronged the shore" to listen, "flapped their tails and opened their mouths," and testified their eagerness to "pay homage to the almighty." The Abyssinians canonized Balaam's ass, long before Mussolini asked for their worship. When St. Regulus was about to cast a devil out of a man, and was permitting the devil to enter the body of an ass, the ass made the sign of the cross, and the devil had to seek shelter elsewhere.

There are thousands of such cases in Christian history, and it may be with these in mind that Father Maguire held a service in the Agricultural Hall, Islington. The altar was erected on the tubs used by the animals in their performances. There is no record of anything approaching the experience of the Christian saints in this matter, and in matters of quietness not the most critical of observers could have detected any great difference of expression on the faces of the performing donkeys and on those of the ordinary human attendants. And if God's blessings on the performing animals cause the Lord to move the hearts of the proprietors of the show to give them an extra dainty per day, then if a few shillings per week more are given to the circus workers, the horses will not say "neigh," nor will the higher animals decline another service on similar terms.

The *Universe*, the well known Roman Catholic organ, has lately been attacking astrology, which it claims "is rapidly assuming the dimensions of a national scandal." We cordially agree; but after all, what precisely is the difference between the crass credulity of our astrologers and that of our priests? What exactly is the difference between people who believe that stars and planets influence our lives, and those who believe that dead saints and gods can do so—to say nothing of devils? The priest who foretells that we are going into Purgatory, or Heaven, or Hell if we do not do as he tells us, is surely not one whit superior to the astrologer who tells us that the stars predict a most unhappy time, or that we are

coming into some money, or some other nonsense? Voltaire said somewhere that it was impossible for one priest to see another without laughing; we feel the same when we see a priest and an astrologer actually quarrelling over the difference between bunk and bunkum.

Another astonishing example of the curious ways of Providence is shown in Bristol. The crib and the Sacred Heart altar were destroyed in a fire which occurred at the Church of St. Mary's the other day, and the Sacred Heart statue was actually burned and partially blackened. We simply cannot account for these extraordinary vagaries of God Almighty, but no doubt his anger—if he were angry—was duly appeased by the *Te Deum* wafted up in the original Latin as a thanksgiving that the whole church was not destroyed.

How very very cautious the Holy See is becoming! The other day some children at Voltago, in Italy, saw some apparitions of "Our Lady." Not so very many years ago this would have meant the formation of a Grotto, the Canonization of the most foolish of the children, the arranging of numerous excursions to the Holy Place, and the certifying by doctors of remarkable cures of incurable ailments by the dozen. Alas, nowadays the Holy Office is a wee bit more sceptical. The apparitions were investigated and the dear, little children were proved to be dear little, but undoubted, liars. And another Lourdes has gone west.

The *Universe* is rather cruel to those who proclaim the many glorious benefits which the Catholic Religion has brought to the needs of mankind. It asserts that the turkey we eat (if we can afford it) at Christmas was introduced by the Jesuits; St. Ignatius, it says, gave us Quinine. We know all about Benedictine and Chartrouse. And the *Universe* unkindly concludes its list of "benefits":—

If readers know of any, I shall be glad to hear of other delicacies or useful commodities bequeathed to us by the Church.

Nor can we pass the words "bequeathed" to us! Rich people can buy these things and the poor can go without them—in neither case is there any gratuitous "legacy" about it.

The *Daily Herald*, which was started as a Labour paper, is carrying on an enquiry "Do Baptisms lack Beauty?" If the *Daily Herald* would permit an informed contributor to tell readers the real significance of baptisms, the information would be useful. But that might interfere with the race for a big circulation.

According to the *Sunday Dispatch*, of January 22, there is a war going on in Central Africa. The combatants are rival missionary societies. Protestant missionaries accuse Roman Catholics of securing converts by giving them presents of fish-hooks. The Catholics accuse the others of luring Catholic children away from the fold with gifts of safety pins. Jesus said he would make his disciples fishers of men, so there seems something to be said in favour of fish-hooks. They may be given as symbols. But we do not remember anything in the New Testament about safety pins. Perhaps they have something to do with binding the faithful together.

"What fools these mortals be" who submit to ecclesiastical direction! For two years Mr. John Holden, a Pilling (N. Lanes.) retired farmer, has sued to erect a memorial to his wife in accordance with her dying wish that no cross should be placed over her grave in the local churchyard. The vicar insisted that there must be a cross. Now a special "Consistory Court" held in the village has ruled against Mr. Holden (who has been a member of the parish for over 50 years), and ordered him to pay £15 costs! Those who contend against arbitrary and out-of-date authority are often left sadder if not wiser. The remedy is in their own hands: to have nothing whatever to do with the impertinent rites, ceremonies, forms and orders administered under church rule.

THE FREETHINKER

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TO CORRESPONDENTS.

FOR Advertising and Distributing the *Freethinker*.—S. Hayward, 58.

J. J. TOBIN.—According to information given the firm of photographers has been out of business for some time.

W.T.N. (New York).—You will see our opinion of President Roosevelt's view that democracy is based on religion, in "Views and Opinions" for January 22, although the criticism was written in reply to a similar statement by another person. But the best of men seem unable to avoid being nonsensical when they fall back upon religion.

E. TRASK.—Thanks. Will be useful.

J. R. LICKFOLD.—Thanks, if the idea matures, your contribution will prove useful.

FRED C. HOLDEN (U.S.A.).—Thanks for addresses of likely new readers; paper being sent for four weeks.

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.

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

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.

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 (Sunday, February 5) Mr. Cohen will address the Nottingham Debating Society in the University College Lecture Theatre, Shakespeare Street. This is an afternoon meeting, the chair being taken at 2.30.

There was no mistaking the complete success of the N.S.S. Annual Dinner at the Waldorf Hotel on Saturday, January 28. The influenza epidemic took its toll on a liberal scale, and there was an unusually large number of absentees from illness. But in spite of this the number was as large as ever, and it was a satisfying thing to note the number of newcomers, of both sexes, who established personal contact with us for the first time. The speeches were all excellent, the concert was well up to the usual high level, and Mario de Pietro came as a revelation of what can be done with a musical instrument when it is in the hands of a master. The Provinces were well represented by visitors from Sheffield, Colchester, Derby, Cirencester, Wigan, Manchester, Liverpool, Portsmouth, Birmingham, Leicester and Glasgow, etc. The counties of Durham and Northumberland were also represented.

The *Daily Telegraph* tells us that:—

A boy and a girl, among an audience of school children at the Royal Institution, London, plunged their

hands into a stream of molten lead to prove their faith in science.

They had washed their hands, in diluted ammonia to remove grease. Prof. James Kendall (Edinburgh) made the experiment first, and then the girl placed her hands in the stream, letting the lead flow from her fingers.

The boy did the same, and splashed the lead about.

A medical authority explained to a representative of the *Daily Telegraph*: "The heat of the metal causes the thin layer of perspiration on the hand to evaporate, so that, for a few seconds, there is an insulation of steam between the metal and the skin. The hand is first washed in ammonia to clean the skin and open the pores. If the pores were covered by grease, the experimenter would be burned."

The experiment described would have had extraordinary effects in the days of trial by ordeal; and what a priceless boon it would have been even to-day to religion if some church had been able to keep the knowledge of the process SECRET! "Priceless" is, indeed, the word!

A number of vicars, deans, and canons, together with laymen, have issued what they call a "liberal" Manifesto to those Christians who are not altogether satisfied with their Christianity, and who look like "backsliding." This address is an attempt to put "reason" into "the thought of the Church," and is about as fatuous a piece of nonsense as we have seen for many a long day. The signatories declare their complete belief.

in the Catholic Faith, in one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, in the Incarnation of the Word in the historical Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the historical truth of His Virgin Birth and His Bodily Resurrection from the dead, in the Eucharistic Sacrifice and Presence, in the aid given by the prayers of the Blessed Mary and all the Saints.

We wonder why Jack and the Beanstalk, and the little old woman who lived in a shoe are left out.

On Sunday next (February 12), Mr. Cohen lectures in the Stratford Town Hall. This will be Mr. Cohen's only meeting in London this season.

The religious education question is still racking Liverpool. Liverpool City Council have opposed giving any grants to non-provided schools—that is, to help those definitely religious bodies which want their schools to be under the thumb of priests and parsons. The Board of Education has withheld its grants also till the question be settled. It should be pointed out that the Liverpool City Council, which is fighting hard to prevent education grants being made for mostly religious purposes, claims that it was elected for this purpose as it made the question the prominent one on its platform. The Labour Party supported the policy of grants for religious schools, and as a consequence lost some of its seats. If only a number of other Councils could make the same sort of determined stand as in Liverpool, the cause of Secular Education would be materially advanced. For that is the only fair solution to the whole trouble.

At the Memorial Social Club, Highway, Wapping, last Sunday afternoon, Mr. R. H. Rosetti addressed the members of the club on "What is Atheism?" The room was packed with young people who followed the address very closely and asked many intelligent questions afterwards. The Executive of the N.S.S. is always prepared to send speakers to address outside organizations on the question of Freethought, and considers it a very useful side of the Society's work.

A reader of *Materialism Restated* points out the following printer's errors in the recent edition of that work. On p. 170 "Casual," four lines from bottom of text, should read "Causal." Page 97, line 8, "anti-materialist" should read "Materialist."

The 42nd Annual Dinner of the National Secular Society

ONCE again friends and members of the National Secular Society met in what has become one of the most popular functions of the year for Freethinkers—their Annual Dinner. This time, the Waldorf Hotel was the rendezvous, and both the reception and dining-rooms made a delightful picture with their tasteful decorations contrasting with the pretty dresses worn by the ladies who graced the proceedings with their happy presence. Everybody was out for a good time, and they were not disappointed. The Chairman and Mrs. Cohen received the guests, many of whom attended the Dinner for the first time, and soon everybody was at ease meeting old friends and making new ones. The attendance was remarkably good considering the many adverse circumstances which caused the absence of so many people who regularly attended the function in the past. On the other hand there were quite a number of new and young people, which was all to the good. Actually the attendance quite equalled many dinners of previous years.

The dinner itself was a most enjoyable one, tastefully served, and it gave one the chance of making new friends at the tables. And after it was over, the guests settled down to enjoy the after-dinner speeches, which are always a great feature, and the excellent programme provided of first-class turns in music and comedy.

The Chairman's address is always the "high-spot" of the evening, and it is not too much to say that he has rarely made a better one. It had all its old qualities of humour alternating with the serious note, and it received a great ovation from the keenly interested guests. Mr. Cohen called attention to the many absentees due to illness or death, and in not a few cases to the fact that a number of friends were helping as far as possible the unfortunate refugees. After this he gave a brief outline of the part played by the National Secular Society in maintaining the tradition of freedom and liberty of thought taught by Thomas Paine, Carlile, and Bradlaugh among others, and showed how many of the things it stood and fought for—such as the Trade Unions, Reform of the Criminal Laws, the Woman's Movement and others—have at last been achieved. After referring to the lies told about the World Union of Freethinkers, and its success in holding its meetings, he briefly referred to the wave of persecution which was sweeping from the slave State, Germany, across Europe; and he concluded on a note of optimism—that though we may still have a hard fight to maintain free speech and a free life, there was a brighter future before us.

The Toast to the National Secular Society was made by Dr. Carmichael in one of his usual witty speeches. He felt that the word "National" could be perhaps better changed in these days to "International," and that the word "Secular" really should have a wider meaning than that generally given to it. Dr. Carmichael made an earnest plea for the maintenance of human dignity—a dignity degraded by the bestial persecution rampant in Dictator States. The toast was drunk with enthusiasm, and Mr. J. T. Brighton responded in a happy speech, in which he insisted that the great ideal was freedom—it was our most priceless possession.

The toast, "Freethought at Home and Abroad," was put by Mrs. Whitefield of Glasgow, the only lady speaker. In a charming and incisive speech, she pointed out how, in this country, Freethought had made such strides that religion was dead for thousands; but abroad the outlook was not so promising. She

had met some of the refugees, who showed, even in this country, fear lest they should be heard. One could only hope that the work of Freethought would never cease. Mr. Bedborough, who followed, showed how religion was responsible, in a great measure, for dictatorships and persecution, and with stirring words concluded the excellent speeches of the evening.

On the entertainment side, it must be said that the performers excelled themselves. Miss Dorothy Hogen showed her skill with some fine pianoforte solos, while Miss Olive Groves was at her best with her artistic rendering of old and new English songs. Mr. Will Kings, who is one of the prime favourites at these dinners, was quite at his best, and it would be difficult to choose his most popular items—his really funny stories or his more serious recitations. While the way in which Mr. Mario de Pietro managed to play Liszt's Second Hungarian Rhapsody—to say nothing of the popular songs in which the audience joined in—on a mere banjo, was a marvel of virtuosity.

Finally, a word must be said for the work put in by the Secretary, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, to whom is due every praise for the smooth running of the proceedings. It is all done "behind the scenes," but is none the less necessary and valuable.

H.C.

Letters to a Christian Friend

(4) THE GOSPELS IN A NEW LIGHT

Wallasey, January, 1939

MY DEAR CHARLES,

Not only did the Ancient World turn in despair from this world to thoughts of the next, in the great "failure of nerve,"¹ but under the pressure of the morbid and exalted religious insistence of the time, that "other world" became an immediate prospect to many, especially among the Jews and the Christians.

"The first generation of Christians lived in the daily expectation that Christ would return from heaven," states a writer in the conservative *Encyclopaedia Britannica*; and later:—

The whole first generation of Christians looked intently for His Coming in power and great glory, which they believed to be near at hand. In such a state of mind as this there was no motive for seeking permanence by writing. Men who imagined that they might at any moment be caught up to meet the Lord in the air were not likely to take steps for the instruction of the generations that might come after them.²

Again, in writing similarly of the late appearance of the Gospels, Prof. B. W. Bacon, another Christian authority, considers it was "partly, no doubt, because of their vivid expectation of the immediate end of the world," that "those who could have perpetuated a full and authentic account of the ministry (of Jesus) were almost incredibly slow to undertake the task."³

This eschatological obsession of the period is important in the light it throws on a number of the reported sayings of Jesus: such as the famous "this generation shall not pass away till all these things come to pass";⁴ the frequent warnings to be always

¹ See Letter No. 2, "The World's 'Failure of Nerve,'" *Freethinker*, January 8; and quotation from *Five Stages of Greek Religion*, Gilbert Murray.

² Art on "Bible," 11th edition.

³ *The Making of the New Testament*.

⁴ Mark xiii. 30; Matt. xxiv. 34; Luke xxi. 32.

prepared for the great event, since none knew the exact day or hour the Lord would come; and other passages that you can look up for yourself if interested. Not only that, but it has an important bearing on both the moral aspect and the practical aspect of the teachings attributed to Jesus.

The way in which those teachings are dominated by the promise of heaven and the threat of hell, we can already understand by reference to the conditions of the times and the demand for a primitive scheme of supernatural salvation. But the fanatical over-emphasis on the reward and punishment theme (as in the Sermon on the Mount, where it is repeated over and over again) really becomes understandable only in the light of this belief that the literal "Kingdom of God" was so near that at any moment men and women might be caught up and ushered into the Presence to receive the blessings of life everlasting; or be called upon to account for their sins and be cast "into the everlasting fire."⁵ They hadn't got much time to accept the Faith without which they would be condemned,⁶ and they must put a move on to insure themselves for a happy eternity while there was yet time. Christianity was a religion with a short time limit!

Moreover, if the end of this transient world and the coming of the kingdom were expected from day to day, one can more easily find a place in the scheme of things for such impractical teachings as living from day to day and taking no thought for the morrow, nor for one's life or clothes or food or welfare, and of not resisting evil, going two miles if compelled to go one, giving someone your cloak if he has sued you and won your coat, and so on.

Now what about the Gospels themselves as witnesses? As you are probably aware, the New Testament is our only source of information about Jesus Christ. Concerning this great and wonderful Jesus and the all-important religion of Christianity, the many Pagan and Jewish writers of the time are for the most part silent. (Read, if you haven't already, Gibbons's sublime irony in his remarks on "the supine inattention of the Pagan and philosophic world to those evidences which were presented by the hand of Omnipotence"; and again, "By the wise dispensation of Providence a mysterious veil was cast over the infancy of the Church which, till the faith of the Christians was matured and their numbers were multiplied, served to protect them not only from the malice, but even from the knowledge, of the Pagan world.")⁷

There are, it is true, four or five outstanding references to Christians in non-Christian writers of the first or early-second century; but their genuineness, except in reference to Christian or Jewish riots, is the subject of perennial dispute. And even if the lot were admitted as they stand, they tell us little, and prove less.

The Gospels, then, are the only sources we have for our knowledge of Jesus Christ and his life and teachings; and, as so much depends upon them, we must naturally examine their credentials as historical witnesses. We cannot accept them as they stand, but must turn to the results of New Testament criticism. And what a quagmire of a subject! More than a century of research and criticism and re-interpretation by generation after generation of Christian and non-Christian scholars has produced only one certain result—agreement on the unreliability of the Gospels as witnesses to the life and teachings of Jesus Christ! Almost as great is the amount of doubt and confusion

about the Epistles of Paul and other books of the New Testament, but let us consider simply the three Synoptic Gospels. The "Gospel according to St. John" is also omitted, as it is even more doubtful, much later, and theologically more specialized.

In brief, the Gospels (like the rest of the New Testament) were not written by people who had seen Jesus; they were not produced until at least two generations after his death—"Mark" at Rome towards the end of the first century, "Luke" and "Matthew" a decade or so later; they were not written as historical, but as theological, works; with the possible exception of "Mark," they were not written by the people whose names they bear; and the Gospels in the form we have them in the Bible contain alterations, interpolations, and such-like divergences from the originals, which have never been traced.

Mark, the reputed author of the first Gospel to appear—after rumour, legend, and Christological fancy had grown up around Jesus for two generations—was not a disciple, and Peter, whose reminiscences he is supposed to be quoting (the Petrine tradition), was dead. Neither Matthew nor Luke wrote the Gospels bearing their names; and the unknown writers simply used the existing "Mark," together with a non-Markan document never traced and oral traditions, as foundations for gospels composed to back up special theological beliefs of their own. (This crediting of one's writings with the authority of being "according to" some eminent person, such as an Apostle or an Evangelist, was apparently a common religious practice of the time).

Prof. Bacon admits (his own italics) :—

To sum up, there is outside of Mark *no* considerable amount of historical material, canonical or uncanonical, for the story of Jesus.

Our Matthew, a Palestinian Jew, the only writer of the New Testament who consistently uses the Hebrew Bible, makes a theoretical reconstruction of the order of events in the Galilean ministry, but otherwise he just incorporates Mark substantially as it was. What he adds in the way of narrative is so meagre in amount, and so manifestly inferior and apocryphal in character, as to prove the extreme poverty of his resources of oral tradition of this type.

Luke has somewhat larger, and (as *literary* products) better narrative additions than Matthew's; but the amount is still extremely meagre, and often *historically* of slight value.⁸

These are serious admissions to be faced even by "liberal" Christian theologians; and a non-Christian critic such as Mr. Thomas Whittaker feels justified in being more definite and drastic :—

The Gospels, to which the primary appeal has to be made, cannot be regarded as historical documents. They are of unknown authorship and of composite origin. Their probable date is more than two generations after the events they professedly record, and they are of miracle-stories all compact. The teacher never appears as a mere human being, but as "the Lord," the "Son of God." . . . We are remote enough here from memoirs of someone who really lived.⁹

Indeed, both these critics agree that in any case the Gospels were not written for a historical purpose, nor with any urge to record accurate history. Prof. Bacon says again :—

Our Mark is a gospel written purely and simply to show how the earthly career of Jesus gave evidence that this was the Son of God, predestined to exaltation to the right hand of power, with little attempt, if any, to bring in the precepts of the New Law. We should realize, however, that this is already a be-

⁵ Matt. xviii. 8-9; xiii. 42 & 50; Mark ix. 43-44, 45-46, 47-48.

⁶ Mark xvi. 16—see also Matt. x. 32; and xii. 32; Mark iii. 28; and Luke xii. 9-10.

⁷ *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

⁸ *The Making of the New Testament*.

⁹ *The Origins of Christianity*.

ginning in the process soon to become controlling, a process of carrying back into the earthly life of Jesus in Galilee first this trait, then that, then all the attributes of the glorified Lord.

Whittaker quotes the writer (or later reviser) of "Luke" against himself, pointing out that "the aim of a sacred narrative is not so to set forth events as to satisfy historical curiosity about the past, but in the words of the Evangelist who is most 'historical' in his pretensions, 'to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among' the hearers of a revelation concerning a God or Son of God. (Luke i. 1)." ¹⁰

And as Mr. Joseph McCabe says of the Sermon on the Mount, after reviewing the conflict of evidence, "we must conclude that, if there are any words of Jesus recorded in these chapters of Matthew, they are unrecognizably lost in the dissertations which his later followers have put into his mouth." ¹¹

So, too, after a look at the clock, must I conclude—this letter! Love to all.

Affectionately,

R. H. S. STANDFAST.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, prologue to 4th edition (1933).

¹¹ *Sources of the Morality of the Gospels*.

A Bundle of Tracts

THE determined activity of the Freethought Party during the nineteenth century led, as can be expected, to the equally determined Christians putting up a spirited fight themselves. They were not going to allow Carlyle, Hetherington, Watson, Holyoake, and Truelove, to put forward a large number of pamphlets without a counterblast; and with the help of the Religious Tract Society and other similar bodies, the country was soon flooded with religious tracts of all kinds. I say, "of all kinds" advisedly because, while some were certainly well written, the others varied from good to bad in an astonishing degree. Thousands of the most widely distributed were indeed such utter rubbish that it is hard to believe any sane or even sensible man ever wrote them.

It should not be forgotten, all the same, that the last century was, in a way, the Golden Age of Christendom. The Roman Catholics could boast of Wiseman, and Manning, and later, of Newman, who had already left an indelible mark on religious literature with his famous and notorious *Tracts for the Times*. Though these were written at first from the standpoint of the Church of England, they contained the ideas which later determined his conversion to the Church of Rome; though their distinguishing characteristic was their wonderful literary style. But if the Church of England lost Newman, there were quite a number of brilliant scholars in her fold who did their best to bolster up the dying faith. It is not, however, with their learned productions I wish to deal, but with a bundle of typical tracts which have lately come into my possession.

Providence has never been kind to religious tracts; they were meant to be distributed, and gradually they would become dirty and torn, and then thrown away. Only when some poor fool thinks that they are worth preserving and gets them bound, have they any chance of survival, and this is what happened to my little collection.

Most tracts have one object only in view, and that is, to frighten people from "infidelity." That is the great sin if not the greatest; and one must give the tract-writers, or at least the tract-distributors, the

quality of sincerity. These people undoubtedly believed that infidelity meant eternal damnation, and eternal damnation was not in their minds just two words. It was the real thing, an eternal burning with all its pain and horror in a real physical hell. It was to save souls from such a terrible fate that the tract was sent forth; and hell was painted with a vigour and a reality worthy of a better subject. Apart from this, many tracts dealt with doctrinal subjects and points about which one could argue even longer than eternity without coming to any definite conclusion. What "the apostle" said or meant, or what Jesus taught, or meant by what he taught, must have filled millions of tracts and nobody is any wiser even to this day.

On the other hand, thousands of tracts dealt with "sin" in its practical aspects, that is, in such things as drunkenness, cruelty, or theft. For example, there is one in my collection called *Crooked Paths or the Gains of Dishonesty*, which recounts how a small boy "pinched" a pocket knife, and what a damnable time he had afterwards. There was a particularly unpleasant Sunday school teacher who found out the theft, and who is put forward as a model of righteousness. In an awful voice he would read out bits of the Bible which denounced theft, and thus make the poor lad howl with terror. Four pages of severe admonition make him "sob and cry aloud for Mercy." This was not, of course, enough; and so we get the following:—

On Sunday morning the boy came to school, and I am happy to say appeared very humble. Mr. Spencer was very early at school; and assembling all the boys around him, with poor John Davis in their midst, he informed them that Thomas Wright's knife was found in the possession of John Davis. He spoke a few words in a solemn way of the dreadful consequence of dishonesty in this world, and of the still more dreadful consequence of it in the next; and hence he said he felt it his duty to punish John Davis, as a warning to other boys, and as a means to deterring him from his wickedness for the time to come. After this the schoolmaster took John Davis into a closet where the books were kept, and gave John a very severe punishment.

All this by a Sunday schoolmaster on a Sunday; which goes to confirm the accounts of the nineteenth century Christian Sunday as being as bad as anything Father Furness ever imagined about Hell. The poor boy then has a prayer said over him, and so "merciful" is the teacher that he insists upon removing the lad from his home and making him take a job with a waggoner; and under no circumstances must he be allowed to call at the "squire's" cottage to receive any charity dispensed by that worthy. "You cannot now visit it," said Mr. Spencer, pointing out that he once had the opportunity of seeing the glory of God, but had forever lost that opportunity.

This kind of tract was distributed in a hundred forms, all with the same idea—the idea of eternal punishment for "sin." It was typical of the Christian thought of the time. And it is now, however disguised. Of course, educated Christians now say that they are ashamed of such crude notions, and try to prove that the picture of a stern, unbending and revengeful deity is a Jewish one: their own Jesus, of course, being all love. But the denunciations of "our Lord" against those who differed from him, as reported by the Gospel writers, prove that he had all the savage qualities of his "father."

"Sin" was indeed the all-pervading topic of thousands of these tracts. In *The Warning Voice*, for instance, written by the Rev. R. Stevenson it is splashed in profusion on every page. "While you are living in sin," he screams, "YOU ARE IN A STATE OF THE GREATEST DANGER." And the poor man lets himself go in this wise:—

Some of you into whose hands these lines may fall, take the name of God in vain, curse and swear, and call for damnation on your souls. Alas, you have never considered what damnation is or you would not trifle with it upon your tongues. The Lord hath declared that he will not hold him guiltless who taketh his name in vain; that is, he will treat him as guilty, and will pour forth that damnation upon him which he has so often called for.

It is good to think that even in those days there were people bold enough to blaspheme, in spite of these awful threats of eternal damnation. Mr. Stevenson, like many other tract writers, gets angrier and angrier in the course of his tract, and finally trumpets forth the terrible truth, that while you are living in sin "THE GREAT GOD IS YOUR ENEMY." And after detailing what all this means, breaks forth in verse. As thus:—

Stop, poor sinner, stop and think
Before you further go!
Will you sport upon the brink
Of everlasting woe?
Once again, I charge you, stop;
For, unless you warning take,
Ere you are aware, you drop
Into the burning lake.

Perhaps it was this sort of thing which sent Newman to Rome rather than his despairing search for a solid base for his religious convictions.

I cannot refrain from quoting another verse of high-class poetry, which tract writers have always felt it their duty to inflict upon their readers:—

Lord, we are vile, conceived in sin,
And born unholy and unclean;
Sprung from the man whose guilty fall,
Corrupts the race and taints us all.
Soon as we draw our infant breath,
The seeds of sin grow up for death;
Thy law demands a perfect heart,
But we're defiled in every part.

That this kind of thing is by no means dead one can see in H. L. Mencken's *Americana*—that choice selection of extracts from all sorts of American publications reproduced in the *American Mercury*. The really religious mind thinks exactly as did these ancient tract-writers—and as did, for that matter, the famous old Church Fathers. And if Freethinkers deserved nothing else, they surely are worth the thanks of the community in general for laughing the drivel of tracts out of all healthy minds. We have not unfortunately scotched their distribution; one picks them up in all sorts of unexpected places. But the modern Christian is not too proud of this method of evangelizing the world. He knows that they are the last word in ignorance, credulity, and hopeless nonsense.

H. CUTNER

Some one had dared to say, "Happy the poor in spirit!" and from that mortal error had sprung the misery of two thousand years. The legend of the benefits of ignorance now appeared like a prolonged social crime. Poverty, dirt, superstition, falsehood, tyranny, woman exploited and held in contempt, man stupefied and mastered, every physical and very moral ill were the fruits of that ignorance which had been fostered intentionally, which had served as a system of State politics and religious police. Knowledge alone would slay mendacious dogmas, disperse those who traded and lived on them, and become the source of wealth, whether in respect to the harvest of the soil, or the general florescence of the human mind. No! happiness has never had its abode in ignorance; it lay in knowledge, which will change the frightful field of material and moral wretchedness into a vast and fruitful expanse whose wealth from year to year culture will increase tenfold.—*Emile Zola.*

Folly Abounding

CHRISTIAN: "What a dreadful state the world is in. I fear that nothing but an era of true Christianity will stop the rot."

Sceptic: "What exactly do you mean by true Christianity?"

C.: "The strict observance of the teachings of the Holy Bible, particularly the precepts enunciated by Christ in his sermon on the Mount."

S.: "Many of the latter are undoubtedly admirable, but it is a mistake for Christians to assume these are peculiar to their own creed, and part of an exclusive revelation to Christianity, for most of them were current long anterior to the Christian era. On the other hand, some are obviously foolish."

C.: "To which do you refer?"

S.: "The commands to be meek in order to inherit the earth; to love our enemies; to resist not evil, but when smitten on one cheek to turn the other also to be smitten; when sued at law and one's coat is taken, to surrender one's cloak also, to give to him who asketh, and to him who would borrow to turn him not away; when compelled by anyone to go a mile, to go with him twain; to refrain from laying up treasures upon earth; to take no thought of the morrow, or what to eat and drink, and so on. If these commands were observed generally it would mean the end of civilized society as we now understand it, and life would become intolerable."

C.: "I had in my mind chiefly Christ's teachings in connexion with charity, mercy and forgiveness."

S.: "These teachings are not confined to Christianity; they are part and parcel of the stock-in-trade of all prominent religions. You have as much or as little justification for selecting true Christianity as a panacea for our worldly ills as, say, true Mahomedanism."

C.: "Whatever you may say to the contrary does not shake my belief that the recipe for our troubles is to be found only in the pages of the Holy Bible."

S.: "The Bible! A book compiled by unknown writers, and teeming with self-contradictions and palpable absurdities!"

C.: "Palpable absurdities! What are they?"

S.: "They are too numerous to mention in detail, and I will, therefore, confine myself to mentioning a few which occur to me at the moment. They are: The Lord's numerous conversations with Moses; the Lord preferring roast meat to cold vegetables; the Lord smelling a sweet savour; Lot's wife becoming a pillar of salt; God showing his back parts to Moses; God regulating the priests' breeches; God giving Moses two tables of stones written with his own finger; Shamgar slaying six hundred Philistines with an ox-goad; Samson's exploit with the jawbone of an ass; every King on earth! visiting Solomon; a wall crushing twenty-seven thousand warriors; the Lord shaving with a hired razor; an ass speaking; all believers given the power to cast out devils, to cure the sick, and to be able to speak with new tongues, and to take poison without any ill-effects; Satan being bound for a thousand years, and the existence of Melchisedech who had neither beginning nor end of day, and who, therefore, may even to-day be met with in the streets of London, or any other town. The widespread belief in this drivel reflects the inane credulity of the human race. By the way, have you ever read the Koran?"

C.: "No."

S.: "Of course you do not believe in the Mohomedan religion?"

C.: "Certainly not."

S.: "Why?"

C. : "Because I was taught in my infancy that Mahomet was an impostor."

S. : "And having been taught this in your childhood you must perforce believe it to your dying day."

C. : "Why not?"

S. : "Without suggesting that you embrace Islam, I recommend you to read the Koran. It is less irrational and is not so open to ridicule as the Bible. Mohammedans would be as justified in claiming it to be the only efficient instrument for securing international appeasement as you are for making a similar claim for the Bible."

PRO REASON

Correspondence

CAUSATION

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—In your issue of January 29 you say: "The properties of hydrogen and oxygen were known before it was shown that water was just H₂O."

That is exactly what they were not. Nothing whatever was then known about the mathematical structure of hydrogen and oxygen. Nobody then had the faintest idea that hydrogen, oxygen, and everything else were merely different mathematical arrangements of the same protons and electrons. Under such conditions it was difficult to guess what might be the result of combining two chemical elements. Now, however, chemists have made considerable progress in foreseeing the results of their experiments. If we knew the exact structure of the different elements, we could predict with absolute certainty in every case the properties of the compound.

R. B. KERR.

[It seems useless to continue a discussion with Mr. Kerr, as he does not appear to have discerned what the dispute is about. The question of the mathematical structure not being known before the time of Priestley has nothing whatever to do with the fact that properties of hydrogen and oxygen were known, and that a knowledge of these properties did not, and could not, enable anyone to predict that water was actually H₂O. For Mr. Kerr's benefit we fancy that most of our readers will be alive to the fact—we may state that the point in dispute is *whether any knowledge* of the qualities of the constituents of a compound considered separately, would enable one to foretell the qualities produced by a combination of these factors. Mr. Kerr's letter has not the slightest bearing on the question at issue.—ED.]

Obituary

THOMAS FREDERICK GREENALL

THE Manchester Branch has lost one of its original members in the death of Thomas Frederick Greenall, which took place on January 21, at the age of 55, after a short illness. Mr. Greenall had been a committee member for a number of years, had acted for a period as literature secretary, and in the earlier days had given his time and ability to many of the social functions which the Branch had organized.

The last offices of respect were paid at the Crematorium on January 26, when Mr. Bayford spoke as to his knowledge of the deceased, who had given so much help to the movement in Manchester. Many members and friends were present, and the writer feels that all would wish to be included in the tribute paid to Mr. Greenall, and to the expression of sympathy given to his widow and relatives.—W.A.A.

HENRY THOMAS MONEY

ON Monday, January 30, the remains of Henry Thomas Money were cremated at the Golders Green Crematorium. Death took place on January 25, at the age of 68. He had a wide range of interests, and although not a mem-

ber of the N.S.S., a Freethought outlook prevailed in all his activities. Kindly in nature and honest in character, he made a large number of friends, many of whom joined the relatives at the Crematorium, where a Secular Service was read by Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

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, Messrs. Bryant, Barnes, Collins, Tuson and Mrs. N. Buxton.

INDOOR

NORTH LONDON BRANCH (The Cricketers' Arms, Inverness Street, Camden Town, N.W.1) : 7.30, R. B. Kerr (Editor, *New Generation*)—"Could Socialism Abolish War?"

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Alexandra Hotel, South Side, Clapham Common, S.W.) : 7.30, Father Dunstan Pontifex, O.S.B.—"An Examination of Some Accusations against Catholics."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1) : 11.0, Professor J. C. Flugel, D.Sc.—"Mind and Body—Some New Sidelights on an Old Problem."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.) : 7.30, Mr. G. Bedborough—"The Report on Church Doctrine."

COUNTRY

INDOOR

BIKENHEAD (Wittal) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane) : 7.0, Dr. Edwards (Liverpool)—"Psychology and the Development of Life."

CHORLEY AND DISTRICT BRANCH N.S.S. (Labour Rooms, Halliwell Street) : 7.30, J. V. Shortt (Liverpool)—"Have We a Free Will?"

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Free Gardeners' Hall, Picardy Place, Edinburgh) : 7.0, Dr. Gresson, Zoology Dept., Edinburgh University. Lantern Lecture—"The Evolution of Cell Life."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow) : 7.0, Councillor Victor Warren—"The Growth and Importance of Local Government in Scotland."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate) : 6.30, Mr. Henry Sara—"Is Spiritualism a Fraud?"

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Islington, Liverpool, entrance in Christian Street) : 7.0, D. Robinson (Liverpool)—A Lecture.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (King's Café, 64-66 Oxford Road, Manchester, near All Saints Church) : 7.0, Mr. C. McKelvie (Liverpool)—A Lecture.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Green Street) : 7.30, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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THE *Freethinker* Endowment Trust was originally registered on August 5, 1925. Until that date the practice had been for many years to issue an annual appeal to make good the deficit on the issue of the paper. It was suggested by some of the constant subscribers that in order to do away with this annual appeal subscribers should capitalize their gifts and create a fund which would bring in an amount adequate to cover the inevitable deficit on a paper of this description. This was done, and a sum of £8,000 subscribed in a little over two years. When the two years losses had been made—the annual subscription was suspended during the raising of the £8,000—there was left a capital sum of just over £7,000 for investment. The income at an all round yield of five per cent did not meet the deficit, but we have managed to get along. Of late nearly half the invested capital has been repaid, and re-investment involved a loss of income. There has in addition been a rise in the cost of printing and also of wages.

By the terms of the Trust no Trustee may derive anything in the shape of payment, or emolument for services rendered, and in the event of the Trust being terminated as no longer necessary, the whole of the capital will be handed over to the National Secular Society for general propaganda purposes.

In these circumstances we beg again to bring the existence of the Trust before readers of the *Freethinker*. The Trust may be benefited by direct gifts of money, by the transfer of shares or by legacy.

It should be said that the *Freethinker* is, and always has been, an independent property. It is a private limited company with a purely nominal capital. It is able to avail itself of the income of the Endowment Trust only when an official accountant has certified the amount of the loss during the year, and then only to the extent of the loss. Unfortunately the income of the Trust does not meet the deficit.

There is no need to say very much here concerning the *Freethinker*, or its value to the Freethought Cause. It holds its own by comparison with any Freethought journal that has ever existed in this country or abroad. It is now in its fifty-eighth year of publication, and stands as high in the estimation of its readers as it has ever done.

The Registered offices of the *Freethinker* Endowment Trust is 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Letters may be addressed to either the Secretary or to the Editor of the *Freethinker* at this address.

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