

THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED by CHAPMAN COHEN •

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

Views and Opinions

Truth and the Christian Church

SOME weeks ago I wrote that "The cowardice of silence and the knavery of misrepresentation go most harmoniously with the Christian faith." On this, "*Laicus Ignotus*," who is responsible for a weekly page of notes in the *Church Times*, remarked, after citing the sentence, "There's richness for you," and that was all. I can only account for this curious comment on the ground that my remark stung, and knowing how impossible it would be to disprove what was said, and anxious to relieve his feelings, the fatuous comment followed. My reason for recurring to this now is that the editor of the *Modern Churchman*, falls foul of the Archbishop of York for saying:

For the Church . . . heresy is more deadly than hypocrisy or even than conscious sin.

And the editor remarks that if that be true then "the laity cannot safely trust the clergy as teachers of moral and spiritual truth where the truth conflicts with tradition," and thinks that my statement, which he cites, is quite justified.

Now although I rank higher the ethic of the Editor of the *Modern Churchman* (in spite of his belief that it is truly Christian) than the Christian standard set forth by the Archbishop of York, I am bound to admit that the latter is historically and doctrinally right, and the teaching of the editor is, from a Christian point of view, morally and historically wrong. The Archbishop puts doctrine above "mere morality"; the editor puts morality above Christian teaching. It is quite true that great Christian writers (alas, there are none living now) have permitted a limited authority to what they called "natural morality," but they also held that it is only authoritative in the absence of "revealed truth," and unless the latter is given a superior position to the former then a revelation does indeed seem waste of time. The Editor of the *Modern Churchman* argues as though we can only accept as a guide just so much of Christianity as commends itself

to common sense and experience. And the Archbishop might well ask where, in that case, stands the authority of the Church. If we are left to find out for ourselves what is right or best, and accept only so much of Christianity as agrees with this, we might just as well dispense with a Christian revelation.

* * *

Heresy and the Church

Primarily, heresy means a departure from established religious belief, and commonly a departure from any established belief. But it is not open for the Christian Church—any Christian Church—to moralize heresy. For the Christian religion is not something that men made by following the example of the negro who boasted that he had carved a wooden god out of his own head. It is something that was given by God to man, and which he was to retain pure and undefiled. The Christian Church carries on its shoulders the terrible burden of a sacred book that contains a revelation from God almighty, and it would be an insult to him, or at least would reflect small credit on his wisdom, if he had said: Here is a revelation that I give to you as a guide, but you must alter it wherever and whenever you find it convenient. The Christian Church has always held that God's word was final, and the Roman Church, and all the other Churches, to some degree, have declared plainly that its interpretation of God's message is correct. Hence the creeds. It is useless saying that ever since the beginning Christians have quarrelled as to what God actually meant; that is quite beside the question. The point is that every Church has claimed its interpretation to be the right one, and that no other interpretation may be admitted. That is the historic truth beginning with the wrangling in the New Testament, and continued through the Roman Church right down to the present day. And all branches of the Church have held that the greatest of all offences is heresy, which is *wrong belief*. Some of the Churches may not have wished to burn heretics, although those who were so charitably disposed were the ones who lacked the power to set the faggots burning, but they all reserved the right to cast out the heretic, which meant consigning him to hell.

Every Christian Church was thus committed to a condemnation of heresy, not as something that *might* be wrong, but which was, in the light of the Christian revelation, indisputably wrong. Further, as it was a denial of God's truth, in both theory and practice heresy became one of the gravest of crimes. The man who robbed his creditors, ill-used his family, black-guarded his neighbours, or told innumerable lies, might be forgiven on earth and in heaven, but heresy was an offence which no Church could overlook. Even though it broke the parson's heart and seriously affected the Church treasury the heretic must be cast out.

I think, therefore, that the Archbishop was right. Heresy to the Church is more deadly than hypocrisy or conscious sin. No man may become a heretic without denying the doctrine of a Church, and no man can disown the doctrine of a Church without questioning the official interpretation of God's revelation. Every Christian Church has heartily damned the heretic in both this world and the next. I am sure that the Archbishop of York regards the editor of the *Modern Churchman* as a wolf in sheep's clothing, and I am certain that he is doctrinally right.

* * *

Cowardly Silence

But my comment was not concerned with any particular Church, with complete catholicity it included all the Churches. I repeat that history and experience prove that "the cowardice of silence and the knavery of misrepresentation go harmoniously with the Christian faith." Mark, I am not saying whether these Churches have rightly interpreted God's word or not. I am making a statement that is historically either true or false, and can easily be shown to be one or the other. Let me take the question of a "cowardly silence" first. Every now and again there is a move made to restate Christian doctrines, Christian beliefs concerning science, biblical criticism, and the origin of religious ideas. It is to be noted that the way to these restatements is not created by Christians; they are common with the better-educated section of the community long before a section of Christian preachers awake to the need for a restatement or revision of Christian beliefs. The clergy do not lead the way in these matters, they follow; and very often the avowal is made openly that unless some such revisions are made the Churches will lose their hold on the people.

So far good. But does anyone believe that when these concessions are made the clergy who propose them have only just discovered so much of the truth about religion, or that all those who know that the old views are indefensible do actually speak out? Add to the clergy who so act, and those who remain silent to the end, the number of laymen who for various reasons do not permit their neighbours to know how little they believe in orthodox Christianity, and we have a very considerable section of the Christian population that may well be charged with practising a "cowardly silence" concerning matters, the truth of which they say is of paramount interest to the community. Sometimes certain parsons will confess that they have long entertained ideas which they hitherto did not dare to state openly. This was the case with Bishop Barnes who some years ago confessed that it was only when he was appointed to the Temple Church, and faced an educated audience that he felt he could make public some of the heresies for which he has since become famous.

No one can deny that silence is maintained for various reasons among the clergy long before they do eventually let out a little truth. And none of those who so act, whether they are laymen or clerics, ever appears to think that what they do runs counter to their Christianity. If this does not prove a cowardly silence, a silence that is maintained from fear of loss of position or income, what does it prove?

* * *

The Lie of the Priest

Now for the knavery of misrepresentation. Here the case is as clear as daylight. The offence runs right through Christian history; and the misrepresentations are not in even the majority of cases accidental. In the majority of instances misrepresentations are quite deliberate, they are persisted in as long as it is possible to do so, and when the misrepresentations can no longer be put forward, they are dropped

without a word of apology, or without a word of condemnation for those who have circulated them.

What is the first picture that we get of Christians in history? It is that of a wrangling, quarrelsome body fighting over minute differences of doctrine, and bringing all sorts of charges against each other. Nothing that has been said in comparatively recent times about the vile lives of unbelievers betters the tales that Christians told about each other in the earliest centuries. In the medieval period historians find the greatest difficulty in clearing the lives of heretics from the vile lies told concerning them by the orthodox Roman Catholic writers. In this falsification the story is continuous from Eusebius to Hilaire Belloc, and in the slandering of opponents from the early Christians to Cardinal Hinsley. If we turn to the period of the Protestant Reformation no one of intelligence would take the stories told of the conduct of Roman Catholics as a whole, or of Roman Catholics concerning Protestants as a whole, at their face value. A change in the relative strength of Christian bodies, or in the intellectual character of the enemy to this or that Christian body, makes no difference to the essential features of the situation. Deists are met with a rehash of the stories that Christians told against each other. A little later these stories are told of Freethinkers generally and of Atheists in particular. Consider the legends that have gathered round the lives of avowed enemies of the Christian religion from Hume to Bradlaugh! The lies about Thomas Paine have not yet lost their currency, and with many of those that have ceased to echo them, they are replaced by the miserable insult that he was "as good as a Christian"! It is not too much to say that no one can safely take anything—whether it be a statement concerning one who was an opponent of the Church, or a document that it paid the Church to falsify, or an event that it paid the Churches to misrepresent—in none of these instances can anyone afford to take the word of Christian writers or speakers without the strongest corroborative evidence.

Of course it is true that this habit of lying about and misrepresenting enemies is not confined to the Christian Churches. It is common in the political and in the literary world, as well as in ordinary life. But when all is said that may be said in this direction, two things remain clear. We must allow for, first, the reaction of the practice of religious lying on secular life, second, the much sharper reaction against exposed liars that exists where religion is not concerned. But there is no sharp and no public reaction against "lying for the greater glory of God." The most that responsible Churchmen have done with respect to the lies about Voltaire, or Paine, or Bradlaugh, the most that responsible Protestants have done about the lies told of Roman Catholics, the most that Roman Catholics have done about the lies told of Protestants, has been ceasing to tell them themselves. They have never had the honesty and courage to denounce these lies from the pulpit. They have reaped whatever profit they could from the lies, and then have done what they could to protect the liars.

So I submit that I was fully justified in saying that "the cowardice of silence and the knavery of misrepresentation go most harmoniously with the Christian faith." No Christian congregation has ever complained of its minister slandering outsiders. No body of Christians has ever made a protest against the historic lies told about Freethinkers. The damning thing about the situation is not that men on the one side should misrepresent and slander those to whom they are opposed. The final condemnation is that this is taken by the general public as a matter of course when Christian feelings are aroused.

"Our Pastors and Masters"

It is from his fellow man that man's everyday danger comes.—*Seneca.*

There is nothing on earth divine besides humanity.
Landor

The inimitable Bishop of London once said that the clergy belonged to "a rotten profession." This frank avowal so upset some of his colleagues that he was constrained to explain that he was, at the moment, considering only the financial position of the alleged descendants of the apostles. Even so, the bishop had himself little to complain of, for his income of £10,000 yearly, with a palace and a town-house thrown in, is more than sufficient to keep forty working-class families in comparative comfort.

From a purely financial point of view the priesthood cannot fairly be described as "a rotten profession." The bulky pages of Crockford's *Clerical Directory* prove it beyond cavil and dispute, for the thousands of entries disclose the comfortable salaries of the rectors and vicars and higher ecclesiastics. It is, however, a sorry trade when judged by strictly ethical and intellectual standards. For the majority of priests are perjurers. The thousands of clergy of the Church of England all subscribe in the most solemn fashion to the "Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion," as by law established. These articles make most curious reading in a country pretending to some culture and some civilization in the twentieth century. They include the belief that Jesus Christ went bodily to hell; that a spirit can be at the same time a father and a son, and also proceed from itself as a ghost; that "Adam" and "Eve" were the first of all human beings, and that they ate forbidden fruit, in consequence of which action countless millions are damned to everlasting torture in an alleged next world; that the Roman Catholic religion, one of the oldest in Christendom, is a vain invention; that the Jewish-Christian Bible is the word of Omnipotence; and that the British Monarch is the head of the Church of Christ, of which he is the defender.

To these precious articles of Faith, among others, every Church of England priest, from the Archbishops to the youngest curate, subscribes. We know perfectly well that great numbers of them do not believe in them, or observe them, that they are quite plainly taking money by false pretences. Their main reason for remaining in this Church is the chance of "purple, palaces, patronage, profit and power," as a former dean of St. Paul's Cathedral expressed it. The right to appoint clergymen to benefices, which is supposed to be the work of the "Holy Spirit," is sold for money in the open market, as if it were so much coal or a quack medicine. Parliament, be it noted, makes the religion, and the landlords appoint its professors, or barter the appointment to the highest bidder. Is it not "a rotten profession?"

The ecclesiastical canons are still in force, except when they conflict with the laws of the land, and Law Courts have decided that they are binding on the clergy. The first dozen canons are aimed directly at Nonconformists, and all but one end with a curse, a distinguishing mark of Christian charity. If you deny the supremacy of the Monarch in Church affairs you are cursed. If you deny that the Church of England teaches the very doctrine of Christ you are cursed. If you say that the Church of England Prayer Book is out of harmony with the Christian Bible you are cursed. And so on, and so forth, in the true, historic spirit of Christian love, which lighted the human bonfires of Smithfield and Stratford, consigned multitudes to the rack and the thumbscrew, and burned old women as witches. But that the law

of the land overrides these ecclesiastical canons, everybody who refused to attend the Anglican Church should be cursed, and the names read out in the places of worship.

It is a bitter and a grievous thing that boys and girls, silly women, and ignorant people, should be taught such mischievous nonsense in language which leads them to believe that millions of their fellow citizens are outcast, and will eventually burn in everlasting hell. It is an affront to the spirit of Democracy, and a savage survival from the Middle Ages, and earlier. For no one can be a loyal Churchman without renouncing his intellectual and moral freedom, and placing his civil loyalty and duty at the mercy of a priest. The clergy impudently pretend to be sacred persons, a holy caste apart from their fellow men. Unless a man accepts them and their dogmatic nonsense, without doubt he shall be tortured everlastingly. That is the Church of England teaching for the masses, tempered with very polite reservations for the aristocracy. Is it not "a rotten profession?"

That continued State support should be given to this huge vested interest, beside which the Primrose League is in the very van of progress, is a gross anachronism in the present day. In the last resort it means subsidizing Superstition and inspiring Ignorance. It perpetuates the puerilities of the past. Mouthing "brotherhood," this Church condemns the majority of the human race to eternal damnation. It divides humanity into "sheep" and "goats," and regards woman not as man's equal, but as the weaker vessel. Preaching the gospel of poverty, it possesses wealth beyond the dreams of avarice. It has no more real significance in modern life than a brontosaurus, which once dominated the animal world, and whose bones now ornament museums alongside the Great Auk's egg. Is it not time that the so-called Church of England shared the fate of the Irish and Welsh Churches, which were disestablished because the Irish and Welsh people had no use for them, and considered them as alien importations?

The trouble with the clergy always has been that they are the custodians of cocksureness. Social reform made the nineteenth century memorable, but this reform was never initiated nor supported by priests. The Bishops in the House of Lords, where of all places they came most closely into touch with the nation at large, actually incurred an amount of hatred which only a perusal of their reactionary votes can explain. These lawn-sleeved legislators were defenders of absolutism, slavery, flogging, and the savage Penal Code; they were the resolute opponents of every political and social reform; and they had their reward from the nation outside the Houses of Parliament. The then Bishop of Bristol had his palace sacked and burnt; the Bishop of Lichfield had to run for his life after preaching at St. Bride's Church, Fleet Street. Archbishop Howley, entering Canterbury, was publicly insulted. Effigies of the bishops were substituted for Guy Fawkes, and the clergy were dubbed the "Black Army" of Despotism. In other words, the Church of England was the bond-slave of privilege and wealth, and maintained:—

The right divine of Kings to govern wrong.

The most convincing proof, however, that priests do belong to a "rotten profession" is that they are, in the last analysis, engaged in precisely the same work as African witch-doctors. This is not so far-fetched as it might appear at first sight. Our priests tell us of gods who get angry with us; of a dreadful devil who must be guarded against, of angels who fly from heaven to earth; of saints who can assist if supplicated. Many thousands of men are engaged in this business, and are well paid for the job. And the priestly profession is as honest as fortune-telling, but

not more so. These priests are allowed to take millions of money for promises of good fortune in "the beautiful land above."

Every one of these sacred clerical castes claims an alliance with the supernatural, and makes money in the process. In the Ages of Faith, when very few ordinary people could either read or write, the clergy gave the impression that they were actually educated, and that they were the custodians of culture. They were neither the one nor the other. To defend a dying creed by reading dead languages may be a profitable hobby, but it has no more to do with modern education than a schoolboy collecting stamps. The clergy, as a body, are only educated in the patter of their profession, and remain ignorant men. The proof is that they use reason to deride reason. Their sermons show what they are like, and the ten-thousand-times repeated stock notions show how far they are out of harmony with the intellectual life of our time, and how far they are antagonistic to an intelligible view of things. Culture is the pursuit of perfection. What regard for perfection can be expected of men who regard with reverence the utterance of their alleged deity: "I will make my arrows drunk with blood"?

MIMNERMUS

Some Abodes of Genius

(Continued from page 197)

WHEN Byron's funeral cortège, attended by the paucity and the pomp of woe, passed through London one who was present wrote in the *London Magazine*: "A few select friends and admirers followed Lord Byron to the grave. In conformity to a singular practice of the great, a long train of their empty coaches followed the mourning coaches, mocking the dead with idle state. Where were the friends with whom wedlock had united him? On his desolate corpse no wife looked, no child shed a tear." Two women there were who paid that last tribute. From the window of a small house in Kentish Town Mary Shelley and Jane Williams watched the passing of a friend who had been present when the bodies of their husbands were cremated on the sea shore at Via Reggia.

And later, a lady who was riding stopped to enquire, "whose funeral train is this?" and fainted when informed that the hearse contained the body of Lord Byron. She was the unhappy Caroline Lamb, one of many who had loved him, not wisely but too well.

Byron lies in the village church of Hucknall, but a more appropriate resting place for the Pilgrim of Eternity, as Shelley designated him, would be one of those Aegean Isles, beloved by poets, gilded with eternal sunshine and washed by "the glad waters of the deep blue sea."

One of the most sincere of those who mourned the poet's death was the mysterious "White Lady," so called from her invariable attire, who, for several years, haunted the grounds of Newstead Abbey. No one knew her history, or from whence she came, her name was Sophia Hyatt; she lodged at a nearby farmhouse and passed her days rambling about the gardens and grounds of Newstead.

The "White Lady," who was near-sighted, was run over and killed by a carrier's cart. On the evening before her death she was seen, on quitting the gardens, to cut a lock of hair from Lord Byron's Newfoundland dog, to whom she was devoted, and to wrap it carefully in her handkerchief. On the same evening she delivered to the lady with whom she had

l lodged for four years a sealed packet, the contents of which were found to consist of a letter and a number of poems; all of the latter referring to the genius of Lord Byron. The letter, which told of her lonely and friendless condition, concluded by thanking her hostess and her family for their kindness, and stating that the only happiness she knew consisted in being permitted to wander at will through the domain of Newstead, and to visit the various scenes associated with the genius of the poet.

Colonel Welman, the owner of Newstead, by whose kindness the "White Lady" was permitted to roam through his estate, arranged that she should be buried in the churchyard of Hucknall, as near as possible to the vault which contains the remains of Lord Byron. And that is all we know of the "White Lady," Sophia Hyatt.

There is a tablet on No. 4 Bennett Street, St. James', where Byron lived in 1813-14; other residences of the poet were, Albany, Block H.6, and Byron House, St. James' Street, where in 1811 he "awoke to find himself famous." Byron's infant daughter, the child of Claire Clairmont, was buried in Harrow Church, the inscription with the text: "I shall go to her, but she shall not return to me," which Byron desired to have inscribed on a memorial tablet was refused by the church authorities—Allegra lies in a nameless grave.

The historic Garrick Villa at Hampton, which I often visited when it was owned by Mrs. Grove, whose hospitality may still be remembered by some old inhabitants, has now fallen on evil days. Some years ago this beautiful house was let in flats, and now the fate which has overtaken Garrick's home in Adelphi Terrace (No. 5, later No. 4) threatens his suburban retreat.

In my childhood old folks still repeated the saying: "as deep as Garrick," which they had learned from those who had seen "little Davie" in his never-to-be-forgotten impersonations of King Lear, Richard III., Abel Drugger and Benedick "the married man"; the latter was a part which he made his own, and chose to play at the Shakespeare Jubilee in 1769. Few, if any, of our actors have worn with equal ease the Sock and Buskin, but the genius of Garrick shone resplendent in both comedy and tragedy.

Dr. Johnson delighted in Garrick Villa and his frequent visits were always welcomed by Garrick and his wife. When admiring the beautiful gardens and river-side lawn the Doctor in one of his despondent moods, remarked to his host: "Ah! David, it is the leaving of such places as this that makes a death-bed terrible."

Many stories were told of Garrick's parsimonious habits, and the banker-poet, Samuel Rogers, was used to relate the following: One night when the actor was entertaining some friends at his Adelphi home the party adjourned after dinner, the night being warm, to the Terrace. They were soon aware that their host was extremely ill at ease and, discovering that this discomposure was caused by his having seen that one of the candles in his drawing-room was wasting in a draught, took a malicious pleasure in prolonging the *al fresco* promenade.

Though Garrick was near in small matters he could be generous in others, and Dr. Johnson who was often rather hard on his friend (as when he said "Punch has no feelings") replied to a query by Boswell: "Sir, a liberal man. He has given away more money than any man in England."

Garrick's lot was an enviable one; he was happily married; he enjoyed both fame, fortune and troops of friends. There are probably some old playgoers who remember Edward Sothorn in Robertson's play *David Garrick*, in which he took the name-part.

It was, like Lamb's first play at "Garrick's Drury," a never-to-be-forgotten experience, for Sothorn's acting—notably in that exacting test, the simulation of intoxication—was admirable.

The story, quite apocryphal, centres in Garrick's promise to Mr. Ingot, unwitting that he is the father of the girl who loves him, and whom he loves, that he will so behave as to turn his daughter's love to disgust. He is invited to dine, and recognizes Miss Ingot as the girl he loves; the conflict between love and honour as represented in this scene, when the actor, while feigning successive stages of drunkenness, strives to conceal his despair, has rarely been so movingly portrayed.

EDGAR SYERS

(To be concluded)

That "Report" Again

THE rather belated criticism on the *Report on Doctrine* may excuse some further references to that ridiculous rigmarole. Issued for Believers Only,* it was out of date long before publication day: indeed the Archbishop himself agrees:—

If we began our work again to-day, its perspectives would be different. (*Report*, p. 17).

In this journal months ago, the Editor and others discussed salient points in the much over-rated *Report*, which is apparently only kept half-alive by comments from various angles. The *Guardian* and the *Modern Churchman*, as well as the Church Union's Criticism only succeed in proving that the *Report* was born antiquated and decrepit.

It is true that over ten thousand clergymen have protested against the "heresies" they think they detect in the 1938 *Report*. But the Archbishops, Bishops and Convocation unanimously hastened to reassure the witch-hunters that there was no cause for alarm, and to fall back upon the Prayer Book and the Bible, which they declare without a single defiant vote to be the only possible basis of doctrine.

The Church Union Manifesto gives the *Report* a handsome Testimonial—specifically stating that "The *Report* is a monument of orthodoxy." This high praise is not discounted by the Church Union realizing that their organization has not gained all its own demands.

It is highly probable that the fears of the 10,000 "protestors" (who need not be taken too seriously) are attributable to what the Church Union claims as its gains. The Church Union boasts of the *Report's* "admirable statement of the Doctrine of the Church," mainly because "it acknowledges the Eucharistic Sacrifice . . . it gives sympathetic treatment to certain aspects of Penance and Absolution . . . and it accepts Prayers for the Dead and even the Invocation of Saints." The anti-ritualists are out of luck, that's all. These Church Union beliefs are "orthodox."

According to the Modernists the *Report* is incomplete. They look for a sequel nearer to their heart's desire. Dean Inge voices their patient amiability thus:—

The work of the Doctrinal Commission is only preparatory. The *Report* claims only to be a useful basis for further work. This is the utmost that can be claimed for it.

while the *Modern Churchman* remarks:—

The defect of the *Report* is that no attempt is made to secure a synthesis of conflicting views.

What is most obvious to outsiders is that the years

* "We are not writing chiefly for the general public." (p. 13, *Report on Doctrine*).

since this Commission was appointed have been years of intensified assault by popular Scepticism on the Church and ALL its doctrines. Whatever the optimistic Christian may have hoped seventeen years ago, he ought to realize by now that the Church is faced with something far more drastic than indifference. As the Church Union frankly points out, in those far-off days

Christians were not oppressed with the urgent sense of crisis and of present conflict between God—and No God.

Perhaps the Freethinkers' International Conference came at an awkward moment for the optimistic Christian. The same year—1938—saw both the publication of the *Doctrinal Report*, saw also the London International Conference and the Glasgow pioneer Civic Reception to the National Secular Society.

It is not wholly irrelevant to refer to the current lip-tributes to Democracy from the less conservative clergy. The Deans of Canterbury and Chichester boldly proclaim their Church's "Democracy"—in contrast to the Totalitarian ideals of the Dictator countries. The Christian Church is not and never has been democratic. The present *Report*, like all its predecessors, is signed by men who have no sort of pretence to be Representative. This Commission—as the title-page of their *Report* says: was

Appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York.

Throughout the ages, Councils and Commission have been thus appointed. The Cardinals who elect a Pope have been carefully selected and made Cardinals by the Pope. Bishops are appointed by the Prime Minister. The clergy get their jobs from commercial proprietors of "livings"—and their "promotion" to more remunerative posts has not the faintest symptom of anything related to democracy. Imagine a popular vote being taken to decide whether the *Song of Solomon* is "inspired," or whether the Creed of St. Athanasius (or any other) is a true statement of what men believe. There is a satirical reference to Church Councils in No. 21 of the 39 Articles of Religion:—

General Councils may not be gathered together without the commandment and will of Princes

and it goes on to assert that even "they may err"!

The Archbishop need not be in awe of those who (he says) "will be startled to find so little said about the Fall, about Freedom, Election, Predestination, Justification," etc. His Grace need not be perturbed! Today the majority of mankind would accept without a tremor a frank repudiation of the entire framework of the Church's Doctrinal basis, including all miracle, all revelation—and indeed all the gods.

The immense preponderance of space given to *The Church and Its Sacraments* (100 pages out of the 250 total) speaks volumes for the Church's egoistic sense of self-importance. Even so, no reform of any kind is suggested in Church government. Apparently the "Doctrine" which so unequally distributes the vast revenues of the endowments of the Church is not going to be "reported" on, or considered. A strong trade-union feeling among the clergy with the lower-grade incomes is likely to awaken these somnolescent prelates.

The Doctrine of Marriage is briefly dismissed, while Divorce is not mentioned. There is a queer evasion of Article 25, which in set terms declines to regard Marriage as a Sacrament. A convenient domestic institution which ought to minister to human happiness is degraded—not exalted—by surrounding it with a mystic halo fit only for stained-glass windows. All "doctrines" concerning marriage are disposed of in 30 puerile lines. Christian couples are assured that

grace is afforded (them) which, if reliance is fully placed on it, will enable the persons concerned to fulfil the obligations involved, and to rise to the opportunities offered in their married life in spite of all difficulties, however grave.

We hope no pun is intended in the final word "grave"! But this travesty of consolation is as ridiculous as the determined refusal to re-marry legally divorced people is illegal. And what are the "opportunities" afforded to one whose mate-for-life is permanently fixed-up with a different mate, or where one's "companion" or "help-meet" is in Broadmoor for life? It is high time that the LEGAL doctrines of marriage were removed altogether from the clutches of priests. Let them continue to weave webs of prohibitions around the habits of their congregations. But these interferences should be wholly ignored by the State—like the Prayer for Rain or any other piece of pious hocus-pocus.

The Archbishop intimates that the Commission's meetings

are associated in my mind with mingled hilarity and devotion.

No doubt the most "hilarious" of these meetings must have been when the "Eucharist" was considered. The word "Eucharist" was adopted as a compromise between the word MASS, hated by Low Churchmen, and the LORD'S SUPPER loathed by High Churchmen. On pages 172-178 is discussed the doctrine of Trans-substantiation. Do the Bread and Wine become literally the genuine Body and Blood of Christ? Against this theory, one of the main arguments was "that it is contrary to the nature of a Body to be in two places at once" (unless one is a bird, Boyle Roche would have said). Aptly put is another argument:—

If the bread and wine cease after consecration to be really bread and wine, they cease to be really sacramental signs (p. 174.)

—one of the few samples of commonsense—and satire—in a very far from "hilarious" Report.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH

Now and Then

OTHER times other ways is a very old maxim; it is of value mainly because it is so obviously true—once the truth is pointed out. We look at the sun and moon and marvel at the "miracle" of their suspension in space, until we become alive to the fact that the same "miracle" is illustrated by the globe on which we tread. An imaginary change of position is enough to bring home the last-named truth. We have to compare the past with the present properly to appreciate the commonplace character of the first.

We had an illustration of this at the Winter Garden Theatre, while watching the first night presentation of a revised version of "Dracula," based upon Bram Stoker's well-known novel of that name. The play was well presented, so far as the actors and actresses were concerned. They worked with a will, and deserved the applause that was liberally given both during the performance and at the final curtain. The play was preceded by a "curtain raiser," which provided some satirical songs and impressions of famous theatrical characters, by Peter Cotes, that well deserved the hearty appreciation shown by a full, if not a crowded house. Mr. Cotes is a young man, and he shows great possibilities.

A full orchestra would have much helped both Mr. Cotes and the play. Pianos are no adequate substitute in such cases, good though the instrumentalists may be. And in a play where so much depends upon the creation of an atmosphere of momentary, if unrecognized, fear of the supernatural, it is a mistake to have the master

Vampire biting his victim so that he can be plainly seen, and the budding vampire behaving in the same conditions to her fiancé. In such cases the more that is left to the imagination the better. A well behaved ghost never visits one in broad daylight. It is when the lights are very low and outside the house it is dark, and one is either just falling asleep or just waking up, that ghosts who know their business come to one. Moreover, if we are to keep to the vampire legend, it is not the human being that sucks the blood of his victim, but the human transformed into an animal—a bat or a wolf, and when the animal is killed there is always a human being lying dead. The Winter Garden Vampires bite the necks of their victims so that they can be seen doing it, and this might have passed as a struggle for a kiss.

The belief in vampires is one of the oldest of religious beliefs. It belongs to that golden age of religion when human beings might be transformed into animals and *vice versa*. Our fairy tales are full of these stories, and there are many parts of the world, remote parts of this country, parts of Italy and the South East of Europe, where the belief exists in a more or less modified form. And, after all, the belief that animals may be transformed into men and men into animals is certainly as intellectually respectable as the belief that a wafer and a glass of cheap wine may be turned into the flesh and blood of a man who is believed to have died some two thousand years ago.

But truth to tell the performance had not been going very long before I became as interested in the audience as I was in the performance; or to put it in another way, the audience became part of the performance. When I first saw "Dracula" many years ago, I can recall the fact that the audience received it with a proper amount of thrill. It may not be that very many of the audience believed in the possibility of vampires, although when one is familiar with the theories of Theosophists, the yarns of Spiritualists, the superstitions that are received with respect when they are clothed in a bastard scientific terminology, and the lingering fondness that half-baked intellects take in the "occult" and the "mystical," there may have been many present who were not free from the belief that vampires do exist. At any rate I remember that the play was received then with respectful silence, and a little of that drawing of the breath when a situation is concluded that is indicative of emotional strain.

But a great many of the first-nighters at this revival of "Dracula" actually laughed at some of the most "thrilling incidents." Not because they did not appreciate the acting of those on the stage; the reverse of this was shown by the applause at the close of each act, and at the final "curtain." It was that they simply could not work up the feeling of being thrilled at either the verbal defence of the vampire by Mr. Ivor Samson—well delivered as that was, and the excellent Dracula of Mr. Hamilton Deane. The truth of what has been said is further attested by the hearty reception of Bernard Jukes' half insane Renfield. That was taken as it should have been taken, and the explanation is that while insanity is a fact, the vampire could not be more than a superstition in which most people would be ashamed to confess belief.

And herein lies the moral of what I have said, and the real reason for writing these notes. The past fifty years has seen an enormous discrediting of the supernatural among educated, thoughtful men and women. There is what many people imagine is a revival of superstition, but that is wrong. The superstition was always there, but it was held in control by the number of people of a better type of intelligence who could still give it some amount of support. Nowadays the vast mass of superstition that exists is less under control. Many of those who know better in Church and State are induced for reasons best known to themselves to give support to such mixtures of eroticism and religion as the group movement and to similar eruptions of the primitive. But in the theatre I was present at a gathering where there was no such inducement to pretend sympathy with the religious beliefs such as are embodied in "Dracula," even the flight of Dracula secured by showing him the crucifix, and the statement that "holy water" was required to

beat the Vampire, gave rise to laughs in different parts of the theatre. It was a registration of the difference between "Then" and Now." The years of work have not been barren of results.

But I should not be surprised if "Dracula" secures a moderate run. A large section of the population is still primitive enough to have a sneaking belief in the possibility of such things as vampires. And why not? After all, gods belong to the same stuff of which vampires are made. And so the caste of "Dracula" may receive some deserved reward for their efforts.

QUONDAM

Acid Drops

Commenting on the French President's visit to London, Mr. Duff Cooper moralizes:—

It is one of the disadvantages inseparable from the Republican form of Government that no President can hope to command the prestige and glamour of a crowned head.

That may be, probably is, true for the majority of people, but, if true, it is paying the English people anything but a compliment. Put the same idea in another way, without altering its sense of application. Thus:—

It is one of the advantages of having at the head of the State a crowned head that it enjoys a prestige and exerts a glamour that no President can, no matter how great his merits may be.

It does not sound quite so flattering in that form, and yet it is only laying bare the plain significance of the statement. It means that the majority of the British people are more impressed with a crowned head, even though the head be an empty one, than it is by a President of a State no matter how great a man he may be. We are not even questioning the truth of the statement. We know that in the majority of instances it is the case; we are not far enough removed from the primitive to rank human worth higher than a uniform or a semi-mystical title. There is here, indeed, a lesson for the politician, which he will exploit, and also for those to think over who would raise the level of the people.

Mr. Cooper, we hope we shall not be considered uncivil in omitting the first name, also says of Englishmen that "they fear making fools of themselves more than they fear death." This is one of those very common generalizations that are very popular and very foolish. It is no more true of Englishmen than it is of Frenchmen, and it is untrue of any nation as a whole. As a matter of fact it is one of the good qualities of most Englishmen that they cannot merely act foolishly without being seriously disturbed; they enjoy seeing themselves in absurd positions. The average Englishman can laugh at himself, and that is a very healthy quality. Where it is true, it is mostly when the Englishman considers himself of a "better class" than the ones who are laughing at him. For example, it would not be considered unpleasant for a man's friends to laugh at him, but let the footman dare to do so, or a workman laugh at many an employer, then the situation is quite different. Mr. Cooper ought really to be careful with his generalizations. They are insults or indictments under cover of compliments or analyses. I should not be at all surprised if Mr. Cooper would think I was acting very wrongly in laughing at what he has said. I imagine he is in the habit of taking himself very seriously—and that really is an almost unforgivable fault.

Of course all this is only another example of the vulgar, and fundamentally ignorant, way of considering a whole people as though they were a single individual—the English believe this, or the French that, or France says, or England says. And having fooled ourselves by picturing a country as a single individual, we are ready for any absurdity, or even atrocity, or a veneration or

profession of affection in a form that is equally absurd. Opinions, attractions and repulsions, vary with every country. Some Frenchmen are as good as some Englishmen, some Englishmen are as sensible as some Frenchmen, there are some Frenchmen and some Englishmen who will give all they have for a friend, and there are other Englishmen and other Frenchmen who will sell him to the highest bidders. If we are ever to kill those foolish notions that lie at the root of racialism and a foolish nationalism, we have to beware of such falls into absurdity as those noted.

The *News-Chronicle* chides the Brigands of Berlin for believing that God is on the side of the big bombers. As a Christian newspaper it believes otherwise. God adjusts things later. But it is puzzling to us to realize in what way God can make good the murder of men, women and children, the robberies and the bestialities committed by Hitler and Co., by one day in the future punishing the gangsters. How can God's interference—in the end—put right the wrongs done in the present? Huxley once asked a Christian opponent who came out with the *News-Chronicle* stupidity, in what way was the Eohippus, who was crushed out a million years ago, compensated by his ancestor winning the Derby? No answer was given. Perhaps the *News-Chronicle* will turn the problem over to its tame parson for a solution.

The *Church Times* sails in with much the same kind of twaddle. It says the Christian will find in the approach of Easter faith the ultimate victory of right. But it is not the ultimate victory of right over wrong that is most needed, but the prevention of wrong and injustice now. Even giving a man compensation for the wrong done to him, does not remove the injustice perpetrated. You cannot un-pull a man's nose. A nose that has once been pulled remains pulled for ever. Besides, the *Church Times* ought to remember that what it would call the first Easter marked to Christians the triumph of injustice of man crucifying God on the cross. Which leaves us wondering how the triumph of injustice in A.D. 33 can assure us of the triumph of justice on some unnamed date after 1939. For cock-eyed reasoning commend us to Christian journalism.

A writer in the *Modern Churchman*—commenting on "the shrinkings of Easter Communicants which amounts to 93,213 in the last three years" suggests that "many people abstained from communicating because of the use of a common cup." It is suggested that the use of "small individual cups" would cure this shrinkage! Can it be supposed that Christians would risk their soul's salvation merely to avoid unhygienic cups? Shall we see some day as an addition to the ritual announcement ("I purpose . . . to administer . . . the Most Comfortable Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ") the words Please Bring Your Own Mug With You? We saw a few days ago that the Pope refused to swallow the "Sacred Elements" until a satellite had first "tried out" the said elements in case they were poisoned. Blood-poisoning—even in a cup—ought to be avoided.

Mr. Hugh Redwood describes himself as "By profession a journalist and by persuasion an evangelist." He is a great believer in "paraphrasing." Nothing apparently that the Holy Ghost ever "inspired" is of any use until Mr. Redwood has overhauled it and translated it into the jargon of his "profession." "Even John iii. 16, which is the heart of the gospel needs paraphrasing," is his way of putting it, and he pathetically asks, "Why not put the Bible story into the language of the English street?" Yes, but all experience teaches that—in the case of the Bible at least—"to be intelligible is to be found out." Even the vulgarity of Woodbine Willie in England, and the ludicrous unseemliness of Billy Sunday in America, merely exposed the inherent absurdities of the ideas which lay underneath the fine phrasing of Elizabethan Christian scholars.

Shylock's scheme of revenge was only to "better the instruction" of Christian example. (*Merchant of Venice*: Act III., Se I.). Now Japan may well plead the like for many of her acts since that "flowery land" cast aside its old Art and Beauty to follow the bloody armament policies of the Christian West. Yes: Japan is indeed "bettering the instruction," if we may rely on a report from the British United Press. She has actually initiated a "drive" to exterminate "Thought Criminals"—all those who dare to think in opposition to the State. The B.U.P. says that the latest victim, arrested in his class-room,

is Professor Riehiro Kawai, Liberal economist of Tokyo Imperial University.

The "Kawai Affair" nearly paralysed the teaching activities of the University, as many of his colleagues resigned in protest.

The police have power to arrest "thought criminals" on the spot, to make their own interpretation of what constitutes Communism, Liberalism, or just plain "thought crime."

Several thousands of students and teachers have already been arrested.

The task of the "Thought Police" division of the Metropolitan Police is to search for any individuals who express views contrary to the national policy, an extremely elastic expression.

We need only add that this is obviously an import to Japan from Fascist Germany. One of the leading gangsters, Goebbels, has published to the world the news that they do not wish to have any intellectuals in Germany. And Japanese Nazis, like the British ones, must act up to orders from Hitler and Goebbels if they are to receive support.

The policy of "appeasement" pursues its path, even after its originator has admitted—it is suspected under extreme pressure from many of his supporters—that he was fooled and tricked. Memel has been annexed with the usual accompaniment of armed force and an ultimatum, and now Denmark seems marked down. The Germans there, although they have no wrongs about which to complain, have been ordered to pursue the usual steps, the first of which is to complain of the injustice under which they suffer. Next will follow, we suppose, an appeal to Hitler for help, and then an ultimatum.

Meanwhile it is to be noted that a complete English translation of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* has been published, in which Hitler plainly declares his aims. All that has been available in English up to the present has been a Bowdlerized edition from which the full Hitler programme was carefully excluded. The original volume states quite clearly all that Hitler intended doing, which included the complete domination of the Continent, and the desire to keep on good terms with England until this was accomplished. A writer of a special article in the *Daily Telegraph* for March 23 says quite plainly that this English edition has been unavailable in England hitherto for fear of offending Hitler. But whether that be true or not, the plain fact is that a complete translation has been prevented, and the mass of the British people kept in ignorance of what to expect, and they have had given them, instead, assurances from the Government of the honesty of Hitler.

Apart from all other considerations it would be well if a rigorous enquiry were set on foot to discover, and make public two things; first the cause of the press propaganda which has been kept going by some papers that they were not in opposition to Hitler's claims and the suggestions that Hitler should be given many things, including colonies, and, second, whether it was possible for the Baldwin and Chamberlain Governments not to have been aware of Hitler's real aims, when the printed documents were before them. After all German is not an unknown tongue, and translations could have been procured if wanted. One Member of Parliament writes in the *Manchester Guardian* for March 21, that such information of what was going on behind the scenes was in existence in Government offices compiled and duly docketed. Really it is time that some kind of an enquiry was set up.

One other thing. The present edition of *Mein Kampf* is published at 8s. 6d. That is too high a price. Why not print a complete edition at, say, 2s. 6d., or print such parts as affect this country, and circulate at sixpence? It may also be noted that an attempt was made in the United States to present a complete translation of *Mein Kampf*. It was taken into the courts, and the German claim was set aside. Now, while we are spending hundreds of millions in preparing to fight Germany, and are now denouncing Hitler as a "thrice-perjured traitor," and as we are standing the cost of this preparation to oppose the man for whose honesty Mr. Chamberlain proffered the guarantee of his word, it is just as well that we should have information as to the justice of our cause. If we have been kept in the dark, must we also fight in the dark? The world is paying for Hitler the price of the murder and torture and robbery of millions of people, and it may yet have to pay the price of the deaths of millions of men and women. We shall not fight the less boldly or die the less bravely, if we are treated as grown up responsible individuals instead of irresponsible nincompoops.

Two boys at Liverpool were brought before the juvenile court charged with stripping another boy naked and shooting darts at him. The magistrate regretted he could not order them to be flogged, which would certainly have shown, if it showed nothing else, that he was sorry he could not show that the "law" could be as brutal as an individual. The magistrate remanded the boys in order to consider what could be done with them. We venture to suggest that as a kind of "hang-over" of the Chamberlain "appeasement" the two boys might be sent to Hitler to serve as a personal bodyguard. They would require no further training.

Mr. Phillip Leon, author of an "Oxford" Group book, writes of the "thought which lies at the back of the Group." We often wondered where their "thought" was to be found—lying. Mr. Leon's chief advice to the Group members—and others—is apparently, "Go and hang yourselves," or as he politely puts it, "Be crucified." Perhaps it will come to that in the end, for he wants the world to recognize Christ as "Our one and only Leader, Fuehrer, Duce, the Dictator of the World Resurrection." Jesus as a Dictator has one outstanding advantage—from our point of view—over all living Dictators: he is dead!

Fifty Years Ago

THE fire which consumed Servetus reduced to a cinder the fair fame of his enemy, John Calvin. Vainly have the followers sought to acquit him of this indelible stain upon his character. Mosheim, referring to what Calvin himself avows, viz., "that he would not have persevered so resolutely on the capital charge, had Servetus been but modest, and not rushed madly on his fate," exclaims: "What an avowal! Servetus, after all, must burn, not because he had outraged the word of God, but because he had addressed John Calvin in disrespectful language!" It is impossible to reconcile Calvin's avowal with the theory that he was only influenced by regard for truth. At the same time, it must not be forgotten that the extirpation of heretics was the common creed of Protestants and Catholics alike. The great body of the reformers, including the mild Melancthon, fully approved of Calvin's conduct. Notions of complete toleration were held only by those who were esteemed the vilest heretics. Calvin himself rather boasted than repented the murder. In a letter to the Marquis de Poet, dated September 30, 1561, he says: "Above all, do not fail to rid the country of those zealous scoundrels who stir the people to revolt against us. Such monsters should be exterminated, as I have exterminated Michael Servetus, the Spaniard."

THE FREETHINKER

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

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Sugar Plums

To-day (April 2), Mr. Cohen will speak in the Town Hall, Birmingham. We hope that local Freethinkers will do their best to induce their religious friends to attend. The chair will be taken at 7 o'clock. Admission will be free.

The Glasgow Branch was able to register a complete success with regard to their Annual Dinner. Indeed there were applications for more tickets than could be supplied. Mr. Hamilton, President of the Branch, was in the chair, and discharged his duties effectively, and with a neat humour that was fully appreciated. Mr. Cohen was the guest of the evening, and the entertainment that was provided reached a very high level. Mrs. Muir sang and gave an excellent violin number. Mr. McKinnon provided humorous sketches that were highly appreciated. Mr. Rae and Mrs. McLean sang delightfully. It is to be noted, in view of the excellence of the entertainment, that it was provided by the members. The speeches, which were both witty and to the point, were provided by Mrs. Whitefield, Mr. Muirhead, Mr. Shortt (of Liverpool), and Mr. Cohen. It was a very successful evening.

The large McLellan Galleries provided a full house for Mr. Cohen's lecture on Sunday. As is usual the lecture was followed with every sign of appreciation and enjoyment. There was no mistaking the warmth of the reception given to the lecturer as well as to the lecture. A speaker who cannot give of his best in such circumstances should retire.

The North of Scotland offers some very lovely scenery, and some very interesting scenery when the word "lovely" is not applicable. But there are other things there which may remind us that everything in the Highlands is not so attractive, although to the student of primitive life certain features may be very interesting. For instance, if tourists in the North of Scotland wish to

get water, food, or to be directed on their journey on Sunday, they may find themselves up against the organization formed by the Rev. Ewan McQueen, the members of which undertake to give to Sunday travellers neither food, drink, nor information. The Inn-keeper who belongs to this association will refuse to "take you in," the shopkeeper will decline to sell you stale cakes, the housekeeper will display his brotherly love by refusing you a glass of water. But the Highlands will still be interesting, if only to the anthropologist, because they will enshrine a primitive type of character that is becoming rare in our large centres of population.

The West London Branch N.S.S. is holding a Dinner and Dance on Saturday, April 22, at Slater's Restaurant, 34 High Holborn. Tickets are 4s. each. Tickets may be obtained from Mr. E. C. Saphin, 11 Elmstead Avenue, Preston Road, Wembley, and from the *Freethinker* Office.

No greater educational task was ever undertaken anywhere than that by the Russian Government, when it took in hand a nation of one hundred and seventy millions, eighty-five per cent of whom were illiterate. In less than a generation those figures have been reversed. Further testimony as to the quality of the work done was given by Mr. Derek Wigram, one of the teachers of Bryanston School, Blandford, Dorset, who was in charge of a party of 16-year-old scholars, who visited Russian schools and engaged in talks with Russian school children. The general impression was that the masses of children now growing up in Russia are better educated than masses of English children. Three things that impressed the Russian pupils were the absence of girls in the party, the fact that co-education was not general in England, and the fact that in England different kinds of education were given according to the money that could be spent on them. The matter is dealt with in an article in the *News-Chronicle* for March 23.

MYSELF AND GOD

You, my dear Lord, have little cause to dislike the Freethinker. He has stood between you and your detractors, and declined to accept your authorship of a questionably good deed or of an unquestionably bad one. Over and over again he has denied your responsibility for the crimes with which you have been charged. The Freethinker was the first to deny, against the solid body of your worshippers, that you ever ordered old men and women and children to be burnt for witchcraft. He was the first to deny that you sent bears to devour children because they called one of your followers "Bald-head." He was the first to deny that you would burn people for ever because they did not believe you existed, or did not offer their worship in the right way. He denied that you wrote the stupid and brutal things which, without the slightest evidence, have been attributed to you. And but for the Freethinker, these and many similar things would still be placed to your credit. The Freethinker has never crawled before you, never called himself a worm of the dust in order to emphasize your greatness, or described himself as puny and insignificant in order to flatter your greatness. Men would soon get tired of such fulsome praise, and gods should certainly be above it. The Freethinker has met you, if not as man to man, then as Man to God, and a God in whose presence a man cannot stand with his eyes open and his head up is a being in whose presence no self-respecting person should be pleased to find himself. The Freethinker has asked for proof of the things you have been charged with doing; he does not believe that you have ever done them, and he has a strong suspicion that the list of follies, cruelties, and blunders with which you are charged are so many reflections of man's own ignorance. After all, no God the world has yet seen has been able to rise above the highest conception we can form of man. There is no evidence that you created man, but there are very strong grounds for believing that man created you.

From "*Letters to the Lord*," by Chapman Cohen.

The Cursing of the Fig Tree

(Concluded from page 205)

THUS W. Burkitt and Dr. Coke agree that resentment and vexation caused Jesus to pronounce the curse, yet neither of them appears to have noticed any impropriety in the circumstance.

Beyond doubt this exposition is faithful to the existing sources, to which Dr. Clarke's is false. Both *Matthew* and *Mark* associate the hunger, disappointment, and malediction in such a way as to indicate that the first and second produced the third; which is as much as to say, that Jesus, being hungry and disappointed, wished evil to the inanimate thing that had caused him a keen, if momentary, pang by exciting his false expectations.

W. Burkitt and Dr. Coke also believed, that, in blasting the fruitless fig tree, Jesus desired to prefigure the fate awaiting the Jewish nation for their rejection of the Messianic claims; and Dr. Clarke regards this desire as the sole motive of Jesus in performing that action. Modern apologists adopt Dr. Clarke's view. Yet, according to *Matthew* and *Mark* Jesus made no attempt whatever to point any moral before the disciples drew his attention to the death of the tree; whereupon he taught them a lesson totally different from the one above imputed to him by the apologists; for it described; not the impending ruin of the Jews, but the irresistible efficacy of believing prayer. This lesson was a proper and pertinent inference from the alleged miracle. Jesus had cursed the tree, and the tree had died, proving by its death the power of imprecation—a well known form of prayer. Unhappy, indeed, would have been the moral wrongly assigned by the apologists. The tree could neither help its barrenness nor suffer by its destruction; how, then, would it have served to typify a people culpable of an omission, and capable of feeling the punishment due for their offence? It is to the credit of Jesus, or of those who concocted the story, that no such ridiculous ineptitude proceeded from or was imputed to him on this occasion.

3. The injustice of Jesus in cursing the fig tree.

Whether Jesus intended to wither up the tree, or only to stop it bearing any more fruit, is uncertain, but whichever was his design the fact remains that he sought in the one case to destroy, and in the other to injure, property not at his disposal. Orthodox divines unanimously attribute the withering to the curse, and thus select the worse alternative. The defences they offer are worthy of attention.

Dr. Thomas Coke observes:—

St. Matthew informs us, that it [the fig tree] was *in the way*, that is in the common road, and therefore, probably, no particular person's property; but if it was, being barren, the timber might be as serviceable to the owner as before. So that there was no real injury.

Dr. Adam Clarke says:—

As the fig tree was by the *wayside*, it was no *private* property; and on this account our Lord, or any other traveller, had a right to take the fruits.

Again:—

Being on the *wayside*, it was not *private* but *public* property; and any traveller had an equal right to its fruits.

Now it is quite evident that the right to pluck the fruit of a tree does not necessarily involve the right to sterilize or to kill the tree. According to *Mark*, the incident occurred near Bethany. This is a village at the south east side of Mount Olivet, about two miles from Jerusalem, and on the high road between there

and Jericho.³ The tree may well have been communal property belonging to Bethany. Even if such were not the case, yet, nevertheless, no passing person had the right to injure it. Apart from the question of property, a wise man would have known that with proper care it might bear fruit in coming years; and a good man would not have done anything to hinder scorched wayfarers from seeking the comfort of its spacious leaves.⁴

It is evident that Drs. Coke and Clarke were both alike ignorant with respect to the rights concerning public property; but, the former adds folly to ignorance. For, if the accursed tree possessed some value as timber at the time of the malediction, might it not have acquired still more of this value, had it been permitted to continue growing? Did not its very leafiness promise life? As to its barrenness, would Jesus himself have doomed it to sterility had he believed it to be forever incapable of bearing fruit?

II. The teaching of Jesus in relation to the withering of the fig-tree.

When the disciples marvelled at the destruction of the tree, Jesus, treating the matter as something insignificant, said that provided they had faith they would be able at a word to get mountains torn up and cast into the sea. This saying has ever been a bulwark of hope to those simple ones who, pleading the assurances of God which are yea and amen in Christ Jesus, exclaim with the poet:—

Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees,
And looks to that alone,
Laughs at impossibilities,
And cries, It shall be done.

Other no less sincere but more reflective Christians have found the passage extremely inconvenient; and therefore, have sought to explain it away by pretending that the term mountain, as used on this occasion, is a figurative expression and simply means anything great. This interpretation, they consider, saves the credit of Jesus by placing his statement within the bounds of possibility. Alas, however, whilst attempting to save the guns here, they have elsewhere overlooked and left defenceless a position equally open to attack. For they do not observe that, as Jesus said, believers would be able to do what he had done to the fig tree, one part of his assertion still remains falsified by experience. Moreover, it cannot be admitted that Jesus did use the term mountain in a figurative sense. He indicated a definite fig tree as having been miraculously withered, and a definite mountain, the Mount of Olives,⁵ as being capable of miraculous removal into the midst of the sea. It is, however, mere waste of time to dispute this point, for Jesus after citing the fig tree and the mountain as examples of what had been and could be done in this line, wound up the declaration by saying, "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."

Now, it is an undisputed fact that the most illustrious followers of Jesus, men renowned for their faith and simplicity, have prayed earnestly and yet in vain, for things far more modest and useful than the rooting up and removal of mountains, or even the blasting of fig trees. This fact, implying, as it would seem, the flat denial of experience to the words of Jesus, has greatly exercised the minds of apologists,

³ Bannister's *Survey of the Holy Land*, London, 1844, p. 206. *The School and College St. Mark* [Oxford and Cambridge Edition], by the Rev. F. Marshall, M.A., Gill & Sons, London.

⁴ Bannister says: "To sit under the grateful shadow of the fig tree was an emblem of security and peace." (Micah iv. 1). p. 163.

⁵ "THIS MOUNTAIN pointing to the Mount of Olives," says the Rev. F. Marshall, M.A., shepherd of tender youth.

who to vindicate his veracity, attribute the refusal of such petitions to defectiveness in the faith put forth by the petitioners, thus removing the blame from the shoulders of Jews on to those of the praying Christian. This theory, however, although it suffices to clear the Prophet of Nazareth from the imputation of folly and ignorance, exposes him to the charge of meanness and cunning, since it raises the suspicion that, whilst seeking celebrity through making false promises, he endeavoured to safeguard himself, by inserting a clause designed to preserve his reputation for truthfulness at the expense of his most devoted adherents.

This inquiry now reaches its end. It was not inaptly headed, "A Study in Christian Apologetics." The justification is as follows. The Christian clergy in all lands get their livelihood by teaching the alleged truths of the Bible, particularly those of the New Testament; hence it is their duty to show that they teach what is really true, and do not make a living by vending lies. During the period when "the faith once delivered to the saints" had the support of public opinion, its official custodians needed no stronger arguments than the rack and the stake. When, however, a concurrence of events gave rise to liberty of thought, and more or less enlightened thinkers began to shake the confidence of the public in the trustworthiness of its religious instructors, these were compelled to vindicate their claims at the bar of reason. The present essay shows how some famous ones defended a crucial point of their system, namely the sinlessness of Jesus; and, certainly, examination of the methods used for the purpose inspires no confidence in the uprightness of the users. Others proceeded on the principle of *caveat emptor*, and hold their tongues regarding such doctrines as they know to be indefensible, diverting attention therefrom by dilating upon what appears safe and advantageous.

Divines of this stamp know perfectly well that they are supposed by their employers to hold these rejected beliefs, and that they would be turned out of employment if the rejection thereof were known. No wonder that men of this type rail at any press free enough to attack those who would rather dictate the conduct of others than have their own investigated.

C. CLAYTON DOVE

Letters to A Christian Friend

(7) THE DESCENT FROM THE CROSS

MY DEAR CHARLES,

It is very easy to make a god out of a man. That has been a commonplace happening in mankind's religious history. But it is a very different matter to make a man out of a god.

That is what you are trying to do with this Jesus of yours. You want to take him down off the cross; knock the cobwebs off his apotheosis; make him forget his own primitive cultural environment and religious fanaticism; send him to college to learn the elements of modern science, economics, psychology, and so on; give him a course under the Rev. Leslie Weatherhead; and present him to us as the original "human figure"—the most human and most perfect character the world has ever seen, the greatest social teacher the world has ever known.

Unfortunately you can't do it unless you re-write not only the "Word of God," but the whole history of mankind.

You will probably protest against such statements. You may say that you are not trying to make a man out of a god, nor a god out of a man, but are simply trying to rediscover the man whom others have

turned into a god. Because, you say, Jesus *was* a historic person, and therefore we can get back to that person, however much the theologians have muddled the picture up since. Like the late Sir Hall Caine, in his colossal labours on his *Life of Christ*, you feel that "we have to strip away the layers of supernaturalism and anti-supernaturalism, and try and see what lies beneath."

Sir Hall Caine considered that by doing so we get back "to the true Spiritual Being—the Son of God"; though naturally he used those phrases with all the convenient elasticity of your average modernist, for he regarded Christ as a man, not as a divine being in the supernatural sense. Christ was "a prophet taught by God," whatever that, too, may mean. And then he tells us:—

Yet he preached no doctrine that was new to the world; he promulgated no new creed; he founded no new faith; he established no new church. . . .

As for the Gospel narratives—our only sources of information—they are "feeble," "puerile," sometimes "incredible."

Hardly a great Christian triumph after such tremendous labour and faith—forty years spent off and on in research, including a number of journeys to Palestine, and 3,000,000 words of text and notes, much of the text carefully rewritten and rewritten.

Moreover, all Christians of the Hall Caine "modernist" type of mind stand indicted with him in the comment by a reviewer: "Sir Hall Caine did not face the dilemma that if Jesus was not God He was either an impostor or a hopelessly deluded fanatic."

That's about the size of it, isn't it? That is the position according to the sacred records—those "feeble, puerile, incredible" documents. The fault lies not in the past, not in the Gospel documents; but in this hypocritical modernist attitude of pretending that they contain things they obviously do not contain, pretending that they do not contain things they obviously do contain, pretending that they mean something other than what they do obviously mean.

There may have been a Jew, Jesus, who contented himself with the role of a religious teacher, and did not claim to be the Son of God and the Messiah; but if so, we know nothing about him. The Gospels are not written about him, they are written about Jesus the Christ. If the two, fact and fiction, are mingled in those records, we do not know which is which, we cannot separate the spurious and the genuine. Christianity's own documents are too confused, and the rest of history is silent.

As far as our knowledge goes, when Jesus first makes his appearance on the world stage, it is as a god, not as a man. He is presented to us in his own "biographies" as a supernaturally-born, miracle-working god who performs a god's usual finale of returning from the grave as the conqueror of death and evil. The Gospel writers introduce him and write their pieces round him not as a man (not even as The Most Perfect Man and Greatest and Wisest of Teachers), but as a supernatural being. St. Paul, the business founder of Christianity, was concerned not with a man or a teacher, but with the risen Christ. Sorry, but there it is!

Right from the start, of course, there was constant quarrels and wars between Christians and Christians, and continual massacres and murders of Christians by Christians, on the delicate problems of how much of Jesus was god and how much of him was man, and whether he was or was not one (or one-third) of the Three-in-One-and-One-in-Three. Even when Christians had been taught not to kill, torture

and hate one another because their religious beliefs happened to differ, the old disputes went on, and in more intense and more varied forms.

Inevitably with the extension of scientific and general knowledge and culture, during the last century or two there has been a steadily accelerating swing away from supernaturalism towards naturalism, from a belief in miracles to a more scientific and ordered view of the universe, and from the god to the man. While the older Churches go on preaching the older theologies—though with such accommodations and mental reservations as each Church or individual thinks fit—the trend among the growing body of “modernists” of all denominations is more and more away from the god towards Jesus as a man, a whole man, and nothing but a man. (But *what* a man, as they would say in more fitting terms!)

The Christian who is prepared to absorb a certain amount of modern scientific culture and to examine Christianity in its light, cannot long remain as primitive as his religion. In the end he must either give Christianity up altogether, or “reinterpret” it to bring it up to his modern ideas. The modernist “reinterprets,” and is nothing if not accommodating! Unfortunately, he is not honest enough to agree that his “Christianity” is his own idea, but claims that it is the old, original brand as taught by the “real Jesus” (again his own invention); and where the sacred records obviously are against him, he is driven to distorting their meaning according to the needs of the moment.

Jesus is acclaimed by the modernist as the greatest social teacher; yet when we come to examine his preachings in detail, we not only find that none of them were social teachings in the strict sense of motive, and that some were far from wise or perfect; but we also find that he preached nothing new, nothing that the world did not know already, nothing that was not already part of the life of the time. The reason for the contradiction is obvious. The modernist is making a claim for Jesus that Jesus himself would have indignantly repudiated. Jesus was not a social teacher (not even the Greatest Social Teacher); either he was a god, a messiah, a chosen person, or else he does not matter.

How far the historic role of Jesus has dwindled and the meaning of “Atonement” and “Resurrection” changed in modernist theology—and how far one can be taken by this accommodating modernist spirit—may be gathered from the following quotation. Prof. J. H. Leuba (*God or Man?*) cites it from “The Fifteenth Conference of Modern Churchmen” in *The Modern Churchman* for October, 1928, as an answer given by H. D. A. Major, principal of a school for post-theological studies at Oxford, and editor of *The Modern Churchman*, to the hypothetical question, “What would become of the Christian religion if Jesus were a myth?”

Certainly we should be the poorer if we did not believe in the Incarnation, Atonement, and Resurrection, which are essential Christian doctrines; but it is possible, I think, to believe in the essential truth of each of these doctrines without believing in an historic Jesus. I will not argue that point now, but there is something to be said for it. I would merely remark that we have no difficulty in believing in the profound moral and spiritual truths set forth in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, because it is parable and not history.

But the test of the Christian life is doing the will of God, and would the fact of the discovery that Jesus had never lived affect our conception of the will of God or the sense of obligation to strive to do it? I think it would not for most thoughtful people. But would such a life be really entitled to be called Christian? Yes, it would. Christ's test was the test

of works: the test of conduct and character. We should still have a form of Christian religion which could find its realization in love to God and love to man.

Recently, too, I heard a Christian Unitarian minister of my acquaintance—a most able and charming person—say in a public address: “I don't believe it could be proved, but supposing it were proved to me to-morrow that Jesus did not exist, it would make no difference to me whatever. Because the goodness men saw in Jesus would still be the object of my worship even if it were shown that the goodness he represented was not all united in one person. It exists in other people. I have seen it in other people. It can be seen at its best in such instances as St. Francis of Assisi, who kissed a leper.”

So you see what a slippery slope you are on, Charles. Better be satisfied with Jesus the god or half-god, or you may find that Jesus the man has slipped through your fingers and you are left with nothing at all—except to flounder among such intellectual dishonesties as the above.

All the best. Affectionately,

R. H. S. STANDFAST

On Symbolism Again

I.

A CORRESPONDENT has taken me severely to task on this question of symbolism in the Bible. He claims that I am, so to speak, talking through my hat. He insists that the Bible should be taken literally—except, of course, where metaphors are obviously used, and that the writers certainly believed in miracles just as millions of people do now. Whether Noah really built an Ark may be disputed, but that an Ark of sorts could have been built surely requires no argument. That the Israelites managed to escape out of Egypt through persecution was just as possible as Jews managing to get away from dictator countries now, the “miracles” in the former case being part of the understandable exaggeration of later narrators. And my correspondent expressed surprise that perfectly feasible stories should be considered “symbolism” by freethinkers, when—miracles apart—these stories could be paralleled in authentic history. What was there curious in a teacher like Jesus gathering a few followers during his lifetime and many after his death? Have we not in Joseph Smith, the Mormon, a similar example? What “symbolism” is there in Joe Smith? What symbolism was there in the way he was murdered? As for Bacon and the *Wisdom of the Ancients*, my correspondent asks what evidence is there that the writers of these stories of the ancient gods meant any symbolism—that they decided to hide moral truths and teachings in this way? Bacon certainly saw symbolism, but he might have seen similar things in *Pickwick*. This trick of seeing something in literary works the authors never saw themselves is simply a proof that there are people who can never shed their belief in the marvellous; it is part and parcel of “esotericism” or the “occult.”

Let me admit, in the first place, that while there is quite a lot in what my critic says, he does not cover everything. The Bible is a very big book, or rather a collection of books. How many times it has been edited or worked over it is impossible now to say. We do not know who the writers were, what was originally written, when or where, and this applies both to the Old and the New Testament. We do know one thing however, and that is, that both the old Rabbinical commentators, and the old Church Fathers,

APRIL 2, 1939

had no doubt whatever that there was a hidden meaning in the Bible stories. Let me give a few cases.

The number seven occurs over and over again in the Bible. If this is mere accident or pure coincidence then nothing more need be said; but the occurrences are so remarkable that it would be absurd to dismiss them off hand in this way. In his *Number in Scripture*, the Rev. E. W. Bullinger deals exhaustively with them, and I should dearly like to see a reply to his contentions. He says:—

Seven occurs 287 times in the Old Testament or 7×41 .

Seventh, the fractional part, occurs 98 times, or 7×14 .

Seven-fold occurs 7 times.

The above three numbers together are, of course, a multiple of seven, but a very remarkable one, $287 \times 98 \times 7 = 392$, and 392 is $7^2 \times 7^3$, or 8 times the square of seven ($7^2 \times 8$).

The account of the Creation in Genesis consists of 7 words, and 28 letters (4×7); but one could fill many columns in this journal with instances of the way in which the number is used in the Bible. One of the most remarkable will be found in the two genealogies of Jesus in Matthew and Luke, which I should like to summarize here. They show the way in which the so-called "divine" number seven is used with the number six "which is stamped upon all things human, as being emphatically the number of man." It may be rightly argued that stamping the number seven as "divine" and the number six as "human" is just nonsense. Well, so it is; but the Biblical writers did not think so, and they used these numbers to convey an esoteric message to those in the know, and nowhere did they juggle with numeric symbolism more cleverly than in the genealogies of Jesus.

As is well known, these genealogies have caused a great deal of heart-ache to commentators, as they are exceedingly difficult to reconcile with each other as well as with the list of names in the Old Testament. But as soon as one recognizes that they were artificially composed according to numeric values, the difficulties vanish.

Bullinger claims that Matthew gives the *Royal* genealogy of Jesus as King; Luke gives the *Human* genealogy of Jesus as Man. Matthew's is a *descending* genealogy while Luke's is an *ascending* one. Why? Well, kings trace their *descent*, "all power in the world being derived from God," while "man must trace his *ascent* to some particular ancestor. Matthew's therefore, begins with Abraham, and comes down to Joseph; while Luke's starts from Joseph and goes up to Adam and God."

In Luke "we have in the genealogy exactly 77 names with God at the one end and Jesus at the other." But "the genealogy in Matthew is artificially constructed (according to a recognized custom among the Jews), it is so arranged that it contains 42 generations or six sevens (6×7)."

Actually, there are only 41 names, and if we add four names that should be there from Kings and Chronicles, and add the 21 names before Adam, as given in Luke, we get the number 66. Jesus is, therefore, the 77th name in the line through Nathan, the 66th in the line through Solomon. Thus Jesus is shown to be from this conjunction of 7, the divine number, and 6, the human number, both God and Man. But there are still more wonders. In Greek, the name Jesus has six letters—it is his birth name as Man. Christ, "his divine title as the Anointed of God," has seven letters. In the genealogies, there are certain names common to both which amount to 36 or 6×6 ; and the number 6 is often associated with Jesus in other ways. His birth was announced in the sixth month, and his crucifixion at the sixth hour.

Although 42 is the number given for the generations in Matthew, there are only 41 names. Why? There are three divisions—in the first two will be found 14 in each, in the third only 13 names. Thirteen contains the divine number 7, and the human number 6, and this is additional proof that Jesus, whose name occurs in the third division, was both God and Man. All this juggling with numbers may appear to be to modern minds rather akin to madness, but it is useless protesting that it is not in the Bible. It is, and it is what we can call symbolism. And thus even if we admit that the stories in the Bible, or some of them, are based on real history, the writers were certainly not content to leave it at that. They must have worked for years arranging certain words and expressions to make up all sorts of numerical symbols—though why they should have imagined their industry was of any use, God alone knows; I do not.

Actually the Bible reeks with numerical mysteries. For example, there are six words which we translate as man—four in Hebrew and two in Greek. The serpent has six Hebrew names. In the Creation we have six days of labour, and the seventh day is for rest; and it would astonish the reader to find how often multiples of seven are used with special and certain significations.

All this only applies to numerical symbolism, but the Bible certainly enshrines other aspects and meanings connected with both sun and phallic worship. I think the question is worth considering in a further article or two.

H. CUTNER

Religion and Ethics

The vulture and the sparrow-hawk
The panther and the bear,
Reveal (the Ministry asserts)
A loving father's care.
No ten commandments cramp their style
Who can but law obey.
Complete, with instincts straight from heaven,
They walk the gospel way.
Endowed with the redeeming grace
Of leopards on the prowl,
The boa-constrictor and the shark,
The jackal and the owl,
The rhino, with its pearly tusk,
The eagle with its beak,
Will prove at any time of day
How heaven protects the weak.
The plaintive mouse will demonstrate
In playing with the cat,
How fully it enjoys the love
That links the dog and rat.
Only the enemies of truth
Would shamelessly deny,
The whale protects the herring
As the spider does the fly.
Each shows how perfect life can be
Where sin is quite unknown,
Where man has never messed things up,
And heaven has ruled alone;
In fact, of all the fear and hate
That blights the planet's span,
The heavens are clearly innocent,
The fault all lies in man—
That monster of iniquity
Who seeks to banish war,
When heaven has always been content
With nature in the raw;
Some demon having conjured up
The sacrilegious whim
That what is good enough for heaven
Must be improved by him.

H.A.T.

Early Church Revenue

ON page 151 of the *Freethinker*, March 5, 1939, you quote the *Evening Standard* article by the ex-Dean Inge.

In this article, Dean Inge refers to the Early Popes deriving a steady income from disorderly houses.

The early English Bishops were not averse to such revenue.

I will quote from the *Transactions of the Philosophical Society*, Volume II., 1700-1720. It was then really a scientific society. Halley, the astronomer, and Newton were contributors to this volume. I have a copy in my possession. Part IV., p. 245, *The Antiquity of Venereal Disease*, paper by W. Bennett:—

By searching into our own antiquities we may be furnished with instances of the frequency of this distemper among us in all its respective stages, before ever our modern authors dream it had its appearance in Europe.

The most likely method to accomplish my design will be first to examine those records that relate to the Stews which were allowed to be kept by authority on the Bank-side in Southwark, under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Winchester. The stews were eighteen in number.

It was the frequency of the disease that put those that had authority under a necessity of making rules and orders. For the same powers that granted a liberty for keeping open such lewd houses must find their interest to secure, as much as possible, all persons from receiving any injury there, lest the frequency of such misfortune should deter others from frequenting them.

Now I find that as early as 1162 divers constitutions relating to the Lordship of Winchester being also confirmed by the King were to be kept for ever in the stews.

But to confirm this farther I find these stews were still in the custody of the Bishop of Winchester, whose palace was situated on Bank-side near the stews in 1430.

After a long description of the disease by the surgical writers of the period, and a reference to the Etymology of the word Apron, Mr. Bennett quotes a manuscript of the Bishoprick of Ossory in Ireland, describing Dr. Hugh Weston—Dean of Windsor, 1556:—

At this day is lecherous Weston, who is more practised in the art of — than all the whores in the stews. . . . He has been sore bitten with a WINCHESTER GOOSE, which was a common phrase for the disease at that time because the stews were under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Winchester.

Simon Fish, a zealous promoter of the Reformation in the reign of Henry VIII., in his *Supplication of Beggars*, presented to the King in 1530, says as follows:—

These be they (speaking of the priests) that corrupt the whole generation of mankind in your Realm, that catching of one woman and bear them to another. . . .

Henry VIII. in his 37th act suppressed the Winchester stews.

In fairness, therefore, to the frailty of the early Popes, I think the ex-Dean might have mentioned that for nearly four hundred years the Bishops of Winchester lived in their palaces on the immoral earnings of women.

Oh stones of Winchester Cathedral what misery carved thy portals!

A. R. BEAMAN

If an offence come out of the Truth, better is it that the offence come, than the Truth be concealed.—*Jerome*.

Obituary

SYDNEY LAMBTON

I REGRET to have to announce the death of yet another of our members. Sydney Lambton, who has been an active member of Chester-le-Street since its formation, died on March 19. He was 51 years of age, and worked up till two or three days of the illness which claimed his life. He was always a willing, and eager advocate of Secularism, and, often at great inconvenience to himself, performed useful services in our cause. Although he had quite a large share of disappointments, and sufferings, he always maintained a clear outlook on life. He had an only son, who was killed when quite a boy in the French Foreign Legion in Africa. The French Government awarded the boy a medal for his bravery.

Sydney Lambton often expressed a desire for a secular funeral, and in accordance with his wishes and, at the request of his family, Mr. J. T. Brighton gave a Secular address at his graveside on March 23.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON

INDOOR

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1) : 11.0, R. H. S. Crossman, M.A.—“Practical Morality.”

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Laurie Arns, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.) : 7.30, Annual General Meeting. Members only.

OUTDOOR

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place) : 7.30, Mr. L. Ebury, A Lecture. Weather permitting.

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

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

COUNTRY

OUTDOOR

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (The Mound) : 7.0, Mr. Frank Smithies—“The Futility of Futurity.”

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Reeces Market) : 7.30, Friday, Mr W. A. Atkinson. Stevenson Square, Sunday, 3.0 and 7.0, Mr. W. A. Atkinson. The *Freethinker* and Pioneer Press literature on sale.

INDOOR

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Birmingham Town Hall) : 7.0, Chapman Cohen—“The New Science and the New God.”

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate) : 6.30, Dramatic Performance by the Secular Players of “A Daughter's Consent,” by Leandro Fernandez Moratin. Translation by Mr F. Mugglestone.

TEES SIDE BRANCH N.S.S. (Jubilee Hall, Leeds Street) : 7.15, A Lecture.

FREETHINKERS' CLUB AND INSTITUTE

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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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Secularism affirms that morality is social in origin and application, and aims at promoting the happiness and well-being of mankind.

Secularism demands the complete secularization of the State, and the abolition of all privileges granted to religious organizations it seeks to spread education, to promote the fraternity of peoples as a means of advancing international peace, to further common cultural interests, and to develop the freedom and dignity of man.

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The following is a quite sufficient form for anyone who desires to benefit the Society by legacy:—

I hereby give and bequeath (*Here insert particulars of legacy*), free of all death duties, to the Trustees of the National Secular Society for all or any of the purposes of the Trust Deed of the said Society.

THE National Secular Society was founded in 1866 by Charles Bradlaugh. He remained its President until shortly before his death, and the N.S.S. has never ceased to live up to the tradition of “Thorough” which Bradlaugh by his life so brilliantly exemplified.

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If you appreciate the work that Bradlaugh did, if you admire the ideals for which he lived and fought, it is not enough merely to admire. The need for action and combined effort is as great to-day as ever. You can best help by filling up the attached form and joining the Society founded by Bradlaugh.

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