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

Views and Opinions

A Famous Freethinker

FOR nearly forty-two years I have been writing articles and paragraphs for this journal, with only one week off. No one has suggested that I should stop, but I am at the moment very busy in other directions, and for this week I propose handing over the "Views and Opinions" section to a very famous writer, who has never before contributed to the *Freethinker*. If readers like the newcomer I may put other famous writers "on the spot." My substitute for this week is Samuel L. Clemens, better known under the pen-name of Mark Twain. My job is to introduce him and then leave him to speak for himself.

It is well-known that Mark Twain was a Freethinker—how much of a Freethinker only his most intimate friends knew. As Mr. Van Wyke Brooks has pointed out in that fine work, *The Ordeal of Mark Twain*—which in many respects is the model of what a good biography should be—Mark Twain was never permitted to express himself thoroughly either with regard to religious or social matters. His wife, to whom he was devoted, and W. D. Howells, acted as censors of his manuscripts, with the result that the real Mark Twain was unknown to the world at large. And when a man gets into the habit of submitting his opinions to a censorship, he usually censors himself in anticipation. For example, Twain wrote a book *What is Man?* It was an essay on Freewill. There was nothing in it that had not been said many, many times before, and in truth it was a very amateurish affair. But the book remained unpublished for twenty-five years for fear, as the author confessed, of shocking his family and others.

In Mark Twain's published works there were many indications of the direction in which his mind leaned. In many of his travel books, and incidentally in other works, there were sly digs at religion and the religious attitude. There was, too, *Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven*, which was never widely circulated in this country, and there was his *Mysterious Stranger*, which was allowed to pass his censors because, one may assume, much of the heresy in it came from the

mouth of Satan. But it contained some deadly criticisms of God, as in the following. Satan speaks:—

A God who could make good children as easily as bad, and yet preferred to make bad ones; who could have made every one of them happy, yet never made a single happy one; who made them prize their bitter life, yet stingily cut it short; who gave his angels eternal happiness unearned, yet required his other children to earn it; who gave his angels painless lives, yet cursed his other children with biting miseries and maladies of mind and body; who mouths justice and invented hell—mouths mercy and invented hell—mouths Golden Rules, and forgiveness multiplied by seven times seven, and invented hell; who mouths morals to other people and had none himself; who frowns upon crimes, yet commits them all, who created man without invitation, then tries to shuffle the responsibility for man's acts upon man, instead of honourably placing it where it belongs, upon himself; and finally, with altogether divine obtuseness, invites this poor abused slave to worship him.

We cannot imagine any church giving that book to its Sunday School scholars as a prize.

Fortunately Twain kept a series of note-books, in which he gave vent to his thoughts in an unrestricted manner. These note-books were published after his death, and were edited by Albert Biglow Paine. Mr. Paine says that the books are published in full, and we must accept his statement. Here, then, is the way in which the real Twain lets himself go when dealing with what Christians regard as the most solemn part of their creed. He had been listening to a sermon:—

The sermon had in it one of those old-timers—one of those sillinesses—which the pulpit used to get eloquent over very frequently: Christ gave his life for our race. Could a man be found who could do such a thing? Millions of men and women have done more; they have frequently given their lives to save even individuals who were in danger—and risked eternal damnation when they did it: for they rushed to the rescue without first squaring up their account with God. Every volunteer in the army offers his life to save his country's honour, and does it on the chance that his death may land him in hell, not on the great white throne, which was Christ's sure destination. For men to throw their lives away for other people's sake is one of the commonest sights in our everyday history. It is ludicrous to see the Church make something fine out of the only instance of it where nothing was risked that was of consequence, for nothing was involved but a few hours of pain; and every girl takes a risk superior to that when she marries and subjects herself to the pains of childbirth, indefinitely repeated.

If Christ was God, then the crucifixion is without dignity. It is merely ridiculous, for to endure several hours pain is nothing heroic in God, in any case.

He comes back to the same theme in another note-book:—

For a man to risk his life (and lose it) for the sake of a friend, a child, a battalion, a king, a country, is no large matter, it has been done a billion times, it is done every day by firemen and by soldiers at eight dollars a month. For a God to take three days on a Cross out of a life of eternal happiness and mastery of the universe is a service which the least among us would be glad to do upon like terms. The world's population is 1,500,000,000; if the offer was made there would be 1,500,000,000 takers.

Could anything be more contemptuous of this central Christian doctrine, of the value of the cheap, shoddy, sentimental slush poured out in myriads of pulpits and thousands of books?

Here again are his real thoughts on the character of the Christian deity:—

If I were going to construct a God I would furnish him with some ways and qualities and characteristics which the present one lacks.

He would not stoop to ask for any man's flatteries; and he would be far above exacting them. I would have him as self-respecting as the better sort of man in these regards.

He would not be a merchant, a trader. He would not buy these things. He would not sell, or offer to sell, temporary benefits or the joys of eternity for the product called worship. I would have him as dignified as the better sort of man is in this regard.

He would value no love but the love born of kindness conferred; not that of benevolence contracted for. Repentance in a man's heart for a wrong done would cancel and annul that sin, and no verbal prayers for forgiveness would be required or desired or expected of that man.

In his Bible there would be no unforgivable sin. He would recognize in himself the author and inventor of sin, and author and inventor of the vehicle and appliances for its commission, and would place the whole of the responsibility where it would of right belong; upon himself, the only sinner.

He would not be a jealous God—a trait so small that even men despise it in each other.

He would keep private his admiration of himself; he would regard self-praise as unbecoming the dignity of his position. He would not have the spirit of vengeance in his heart; then it could not issue from his lips.

There would not be any hell—except the one we live in from the cradle to the grave.

There would not be any heaven—of the kind described in the world's Bibles.

He would spend most of his eternities in trying to forgive himself for making man unhappy when he could have made him happy with the same effort, and he would spend the rest of them in studying astronomy.

The contempt here for the Christian God—for the world's gods, in fact, is complete and uncompromising. It was not, as so many half-hearted unbelievers so often tell us, a criticism of religion in terms of religion, it was a criticism that only a confirmed Atheist could offer. Nor would his editors have passed such pithy and deadly sentences as these:—

What God lacks is conviction—stability of character.

He ought to be a Presbyterian or a Catholic or something—not try to be everything.

I have said hundreds of times that a god who is everything might just as well be nothing—in fact and in effect, he is nothing. As Twain makes Satan say, the Christian deity is just an insane fancy.

Another sentence which would also have been blue-pencilled by his censors, is:—

Christianity will doubtless still survive in the earth ten centuries hence—stuffed and in a museum.

The contempt for Christianity is complete. No wonder his wife would not permit him to publish such

blasphemy. It would have shocked every bootlegger and every gangster in the United States. All the Churches would have denounced such unmitigated blasphemy. It was true, hence it was shocking; it was shocking, therein lay its truth. As Twain himself says in one of his books, "Truth crushed to earth will rise again, but one does not expect it to get up in so great a hurry as this." It lacked "appeasement." Had Twain given himself a free hand in publishing he might have been treated by his countrymen as another great American (by adoption), Thomas Paine, was treated.

In the famous *Yankee at the Court of King Arthur*, Twain does not hide his opinions concerning the tawdry character of a titled nobility and crowned monarchs. Here is a passage from the note-books:—

The kingly office is entitled to no respect. It was originally procured by the highwayman's method. It is no more entitled to respect than the flag of a pirate. A monarch when good is entitled to no more respect than we accord a pirate who keeps Sunday School between crimes; when he is bad he is entitled to none at all.

There are shams and shams, there are frauds and frauds; but the transparentest of all is the sceptered one. We see monarchs go through solemn ceremonies, farces, with straight countenances, but it is not possible to imagine them meeting in private and not laughing in each other's faces.

What is the chiefest privilege remaining to nobility? That you shall not laugh at it. No God and no religion can survive ridicule. No Church, no fraud, can face ridicule in a fair field and live.

I must put a check on Mark Twain, or he will take up the whole of this issue of the *Freethinker*. So I permit him to speak one last piece:—

Loyalty is a word which has worked vast harm; for it has been made to trick men into being "loyal" to a thousand iniquities, whereas the true loyalty should have been to themselves—in which case there would have been a rebellion and a throwing off the deceptive yoke.

The first thing I want to teach men is *disloyalty*, till they get used to disusing that word *loyalty* as representing a virtue. This will beget independence—which is a loyalty to one's best self and principles, and this is often disloyalty to idols and fetiches.

The devotee of "loyalty" to king or party should be a sheep.

He is the counterpart and exactest representative of the king's slave and the party's slave. Follow his leader—to heaven or hell—it's all one to him. He hasn't got enough independence to think it any of his business.

At this point I think I ought to resume editorial control. Too much truth in one dose may induce mental indigestion and moral constipation. When people have been fooled for generations it is perhaps as well that they should not awake to wisdom too abruptly. There is enough in what has been said to blow every Church or Synagogue or Mosque or other refuge of outworn gods sky high, and to give an awful jolt to many of our other institutions. So in spite of these notes being mainly written by some one else, I will have some hand in it, and sign as usual.

CHAPMAN COHEN

Amongst the Gautemalan Indians there are, then, many different types of practice and belief—a diversity of roads leading, however, to the same place. For the point, the fundamental purpose of all these variations on a religious theme, is the same. The worshippers want, first, good luck and protection against the powers of evil; and, second, an excuse for a bit of fun in company.

"Beyond the Mexique Bay," Aldous Huxley.

"Acrobats, not Democrats"

"Peace upon earth," was said, we sing it,
And pay a million priests to bring it,
After two thousand years of mass
We've got as far as poison-gas.—*Thomas Hardy.*

SINCE the advent of the Labour Party to a position of importance in the political world, the clergy have never tired of reminding the Socialists that they have always been sympathetic to social reform. It is a characteristic piece of clerical camouflage, for the clergy as a body, have cared no more for the welfare of the working-classes than the Sultan of Zanzibar for his slaves. This is not the language of rhetoric, but a statement of sober fact.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the clergy viewed with complaisance a state of affairs which moved social reformers to high indignation. People were then hanged for stealing goods over the value of five shillings. Children were employed at hard work when they should have been at school. More than half the population was illiterate. Large numbers of persons were housed worse than animals, and dirt and drunkenness were national failings. The treatment of criminals and of the insane was medieval in its horrors. And all this happened, be it remembered, in the nineteenth century of the Christian era, when, if humaneness were consistent with this antiquated Oriental creed, it should have long since manifested itself.

It was not until the nineteenth century had run nearly half its course that Parliament witnessed the passing of the Factory Acts, and other Bills, which had for their object the freeing of men, women, and children from wretched conditions of labour indistinguishable from slavery. Lord Shaftesbury, who was one of the principle agitators for social reform, wrote in 1844, an accusation of the clergy which is as true to-day as it was nearly a century since:—

I find, as usual, the clergy are, in many cases frigid; in some few, hostile. So it has ever been with me. At first I could get none; at last I have obtained a few, but how miserable a proportion of the entire class! The ecclesiastics, as a mass, are, perhaps, as good as they can be under an institution of things where human nature can have full swing; but they are timid, time-serving, and great worshippers of wealth and power. I can scarcely remember an instance in which a clergyman has been found to maintain the cause of labourers in the face of pew-holders.

This scathing indictment of the attitude of the clergy towards social reform applies with equal force to the Bench of Bishops, which holds the balance of power in the House of Lords. For every effort made by the working classes themselves to secure better social conditions the Episcopal Bench had nothing but the sternest rebuke and the bitterest opposition. For the Luddites breaking machinery in the despair of starvation the law provided the hangman, and the Right-Reverend Fathers-in-God showed no pity. Robert Owen arose with his co-operative socialism and federation of trade unions, and the Bishops called loudly on the Government to crush these heretics. Chartists and trade-unionists made an effort to get the working-classes erect, and the Bishops saw that the leaders were transported. When Joseph Arch, the first working-man to become a Member of Parliament, was championing the cause of the agricultural labourers, the then Bishop of Gloucester suggested, at a public dinner, that the horse-pond was the proper place for agitators.

In its days of weakness the Working-Class Movement found the Bishops always amongst its worst

enemies. To-day, when the Labour Party is a real force in politics, and an ever-increasing power in the country, the bishops and clergy speak smooth things of it. The workman without money, without a vote, without education, without organization, was treated as an inferior, almost as a slave. With political and social ascendancy, Labour can afford to disdain the flattery and patronage of the priests.

The humane legislation of the nineteenth century, resulting in the kindlier treatment of lunatics and criminals; the abolition of the pillory, and the branding of prisoners with a hot iron; the suppression of bear-baiting, cock-fighting, duelling; workhouse reform; the prevention of cruelty to animals; was never initiated by Bishops, nor supported with any spirit by the Episcopal Bench. The whipping of women in public, and the whipping of women in prison, provoked no word of censure from the Bishops. For years reformers urged Parliament to end flogging in the Army and Navy, and though soldiers and sailors actually died under the lash, and petitions were presented, the Bishops sat speechless in the House of Lords.

"Of what use are Bishops in the House of Lords?" asked Lord Shaftesbury, who devoted his life to the amelioration of the condition of the working-classes of his day. Of what use, indeed? These priests were regarded not only as reverend, but right-reverend, thus implying that they possessed a double dose of that quality. And yet as legislators they were the despair, not only of politicians, but of the plain average citizen. They could not be forced to see that our penal laws and moral codes were survivals of barbarism and fear. They were unconcerned that man's flesh and women's flesh should be regarded as merchandise, and that little children should be treated as carrion. They viewed with complacency the whips, chains, and gibbets, which at that time disgraced our prison system. They could not see the plain fact that the poor are poor precisely that the rich may be rich. The slums stood right against Lambeth Palace, and every cathedral town and parish in the country had its quota of poverty, filth, and misery. Could not the Right-Reverend Fathers-in-God see a little beyond the powdered flunkies, the gilt coaches, the pantomime processions, and the needlework of Noddledum? There were whole armies of the houseless and unfed.

These lawn-sleeved ecclesiastics sat in the House of Lords as aristocrats, and regarded themselves as such. Like the Bourbons, they learned nothing and forgot nothing. They had the divine assurance that the poor were always with us, and they no more bothered themselves about poor Englishmen than they did about poor Chinamen in Shanghai, or poor Hindoos in Calcutta. Their concern with the collieries was not the welfare of the miners, but the size of the dividends and royalties. Slums to them were just rents, or ground-rents. The famished sempstress, the unemployed workman, the undernourished children, all these horrors were necessary evils in order that Vanity Fair should have its hour and its fling of idiot's delight.

One conception of their duties as legislators filled the minds of these Bishops. They were in the House of Lords to protect their own Church as a special branch of the Civil Service, and to safeguard that Church as a vested financial interest. The day may come when the people of England will call the Bishops of this Anglican Church before the Bar of Humanity, and in that day strip them of place and power. For they are behind and against the best aspirations of the age, blind supporters of Medievalism, and out of touch with the highest thought around them. They are savage survivals in a country with some claims to be civilized. "Depend upon it," said Gladstone a gen-

eration since, "it is in the masses of the people that the deepest fountains of true life reside." The record of the votes of the Right-Reverend Fathers-in-God, the Bishops of the Established Church, in the House of Lords show that these prelates cared nothing for "the masses of the people." How should they do this thing? They are priests, bent on temporal power, and ever seeking to make principles bend to the necessity of occasion, and basing their crafty calculation on the foibles and follies of their fellow-men. Bishops are in Parliament only to protect the power and privileges of their sacred caste. Like the fabled gods of Olympus, they dwell in another hemisphere, breathe another atmosphere, than "the masses of the people."

MIMNERMUS

Cromwell and Religious Toleration

LORD CLARENDON, the historian, described Cromwell as a brave, bad man, and this harsh judgment was generally accepted until Thomas Carlyle vindicated the Protector's character. Then, largely owing to a restored interest in the Cromwellian period stimulated by the picturesque writings of Macaulay, a saner estimate of the Commonwealth and Protectorate prevailed. The later monographs of the great dictator of such admirers as John Morley, Professors Gardiner and Firth, among others, have been supplemented and modified by the work of John Buchan (Lord Tweedsmuir) which appeared in 1934. Belloc has also intervened and done his best to malign the memory of the man hailed by Charles Bradlaugh as "probably one of the mightiest of England's children." More recently still, Mr. Maurice Ashley has published another biography, *Oliver Cromwell* (Cape, 12s. 6d.), in which the Protector's career is dispassionately studied. In this analysis Oliver emerges as a man, like other men, not free from faults, but as one endowed with sterling qualities of a very pronounced character.

To inveterate vilifiers and idolators alike, Ashley's study may perchance appear a trifle colourless, even though he treats Cromwell as a distinctly conservative authoritarian, at least in political and economic affairs. "I must apologize for my inability," writes Ashley, "to paint Cromwell as black, say, as Mr. Belloc, or as white as Thomas Carlyle. If my portrait is too grey I must blame it on the influence of history teachers, who, (unlike Croce) regard history, if not as an exact science at least as something demanding as impartial an approach to its raw materials as is humanly possible."

However conservative Cromwell may have been in his championship of inalienable property rights, his views concerning religious freedom were decidedly in advance of his age. And unquestionably he would have displayed even greater liberality had it not been for what Thomas Huxley once termed "that chaos of prejudices called public opinion."

True it is that toleration had earlier advocates, but these were voices crying almost unheeded in the wilderness. Cromwell, on the contrary, was to some extent able to apply his principles in practice. Thus, the picture painted by Cromwell's detractors as that of a bigoted and fanatical Puritan is seen to be false. But what seems most remarkable in Oliver's character is the fact that a man so apparently sincere in his Puritan professions, should so completely repudiate the persecuting spirit the overwhelming majority of his co-religionists so deeply cherished.

The theory that Protestantism ever really encouraged the exercise of private judgment is completely falsified by the conduct of nearly all the leaders of

the Reformation. As fiercely as the Roman Church herself, Calvin denounced the subjection of the clergy to secular control. As Ashley pertinently states, clerical domination had been successfully established "in Geneva under Calvin himself and in Scotland under John Knox, and nothing was further from the mind of the average Calvinist than the toleration of religions other than his own. At the opening of the English civil wars he hoped to impose the Presbyterian organization of religion in its completest form in England." This ambition animated Calvinists in Scotland also, and doubtless had not Cromwell and a few enlightened adherents circumvented the would-be persecutors a despotism far more pernicious than that of episcopacy would have been instituted. Fortunately, although they exercised little influence in Parliament, the Independents or Congregationalists had many followers in the Army, especially in the regiments formed by Cromwell in East Anglia.

In 1644 Cromwell secured the appointment of a committee to inquire concerning the best means for creating liberty of conscience without endangering public security. With reference to this, a prominent Presbyterian, Robert Baillie, commented that: "The great shot of Cromwell and Vane is to have a liberty for all religions without any exceptions. Many a time we are put to great trouble of mind: we must make the best of an ill game we can. . . . God help us."

Oliver had no patience with snarling sectaries who damned each other over trifling differences. As a statesman he realized that a stable Government could never exist in a community convulsed by religious discord and rancour. The two chief adversaries at the outbreak of the Civil War were the Anglo-Catholics and the Presbyterians. But even these bodies contained a few who were solicitous for appeasement, and Busher, a Baptist, opined "that if only complete freedom of thought were allowed to prevail truth would be certain to triumph."

Naturally, most of the pleas for toleration came from the minor sects, who were too small in number to aspire to any authority in the State, and were anxious to escape persecution. Some of the more enlightened, however, were guided by principle in their advocacy of religious freedom. But the majority of the Independents themselves, as Dr. Jordan notes, entertained small sympathy towards toleration and merely used it as "a protective cloak for the development of their own faith." Ashley surmises that Cromwell was little indebted to the Independents for his liberal sentiments although their influence may have hardened his attitude towards the Anglicans.

Cromwell's real attitude is most concisely indicated by the historian, Sir Stanley Leathes as follows: "Liberty of worship was accorded all who 'do profess faith in Jesus Christ,' save Papists and prelatists. In practice the prelatists were little molested except when the Royalists were active in conspiracy. Cromwell would willingly have extended some indulgence to the Catholics, but the public opinion of the country was too strong for him. Such favour as he showed to the Jews and Quakers was in advance of his age and could not be too openly manifested." Nor was Oliver really averse to the toleration of anti-trinitarians much as these were loathed, persecuted and vilified.

The Protector may have been influenced indirectly by fine old divines such as Chillingworth and Jeremy Taylor, as well as humanists such as Selden and Sir Thomas Browne. Also he had an intimacy with the Cambridge latitudinarians who wished to place theology on comprehensive philosophical foundations. So long as a man believed—no matter in what form—without prejudice or despite to others, let him enjoy

liberty, urged Cromwell. This attitude was defined by Carlyle as "liberty in non-essentials."

The gentle poet, George Wither, whose open heterodoxy led to his imprisonment under the Stuart Kings was liberated under the Commonwealth and granted a minor clerkship by the Government. In 1656, Cromwell asserted that: "Our practice since the last Parliament has been to let all this nation see that whatever pretensions to religion should appear quiet and peaceable, they should enjoy conscience and liberty to themselves and not make religion a pretence for arms and blood."

In other words, so long as a subject refrained from disturbing the public peace or conspiring against the State, he possessed the utmost freedom to conduct his own form of worship. This sensible arrangement Cromwell supported when he said to a meddlesome subordinate: "Sir, the State in choosing men to serve takes no notice of their opinions, if they be willing faithfully to serve them, that suffices." This common-sense conviction may seem inconsistent with the doctrine of predestination which the Protector was supposed to hold, but perhaps he was unwittingly more greatly influenced by the Erastian theory of the Church's submission to the State. For Selden's contention that the State's intervention should be confined to secular matters—a policy widely pursued by Walsingham and Cecil under Elizabeth—now found several political supporters including Algernon Sidney. Meanwhile, the rigid Presbyterians with their doctrine of exclusive salvation reluctantly conceded toleration to dissenters, while awaiting the day when a restored monarchy would permit their exercise of persecuting powers once more.

Although Cromwell showed a sovereign contempt for the mummeries of Roman Catholicism and prohibited the celebration of the Mass, his antagonism to Romanism seems to have been more political than religious. For priests and their penitents were frequently involved in plots against his life, and scarcely any Catholics had espoused the Parliamentary cause. Yet, in 1656 the French Ambassador in London reported to Paris that "even the Catholics find their position better than under recent Kings, who dared not allow them such a free exercise of their religion." Moreover, Cromwell himself assured Cardinal Mazarin that the authorities would permit the Catholics as much freedom as popular prejudice made possible.

Cromwell's antagonism to the Quakers has been deemed anomalous as the Friends advocated passive resistance and were ever opposed to armed conflict. Still their doctrine of divine illumination by means of inner inspiration sometimes induced them, when exalted by a supposed inner light, to disturb religious services and occasion resentment and riot. As Ashley observes: "We know that hundreds of meetings were disturbed in this way, including two at Canterbury and York, the citadels of State religion." Also, several truculent sects, one dubbed the fighting Quakers, sprang into being, whose antics seem to have foreshadowed the worst extravagances of the modern Salvation Army. Then, in 1656, James Naylor, a professed Quaker and the idol of a flock of foolish females, declared himself Jesus Christ, thus incurring arrest on a charge of blasphemy.

After saving the Unitarian, John Biddle, from a martyr's death, Oliver vainly endeavoured to shield Naylor from the vindictive resentment of a sanctimonious Parliament. During the excitement, some self-styled Quakers, having failed in their efforts to obtain the release of their imprisoned co-religionists, defied the authorities and openly advocated the overthrow of the Protectorate. Thus, Cromwell was compelled to make it perfectly clear that the first duty of the Government is to preserve law and order.

The Protector's Puritan antecedents and Old Testament predilections perhaps inclined him to invite the Jews to England after their long banishment from the country. There is no evidence that he desired their conversion, for his motives were obviously purely political. Nominally converted Jews were already resident in London who were rendering service to the State. Although the divines strongly opposed their return and a conference proved decidedly antagonistic, Cromwell, having ascertained that Jewish re-settlement was not illegal, sanctioned their return.

No legislation guaranteeing toleration became operative until Cromwell attained supreme power. Unfortunately he was handicapped not only by the strictly orthodox, but by the fantastic indiscretions of the dissenting sects. Yet, despite these annoyances he set a fine example to later statesmen. As Ashley very justly states: "At least, Cromwell's conception of liberty of conscience with all its limitations and shortcomings was a noble one, and was his most valuable contribution to political ideas."

T. F. PALMER

Going Home

CHRISTIANS tell us they do not die; at the end of their sojourn in this vale of tears, they simply push open a door and begin to enjoy another type of existence. It was the mission of Jesus to bring this fact of immortality to light. Life on this planet is a preparation for it. We Christians, in this life, practise the precepts of Jesus, the Hero of Part Two. When we are smitten upon the one cheek we turn the other. This prepares us for the eternal life when cheeks can never be smitten whatever the provocation, because there are then no such things as cheeks to smite. We live here amicably with our wives and husbands enduring rebuff and frustration; we devise a technique for living together; we acquire some of the arts of compromise. So that, when we enter upon life everlasting, all we have learnt may be useful to us in a clime where there is neither marriage nor giving in marriage! We learn all the blessings that accrue from meekness; we inherit the earth. But, when we go through the door through which believers go, there is, alas, no earth to inherit! True, the pavements may be of gold and the throne may be of pearls, but as we have learnt in this life that the value of a thing depends upon its rarity we must soon realize we have reached Topsy Turvydom.

When every blessed thing we hold
Is made of silver and gold
We long for simple pewter.

We study our stomachs and food values; we put our digestions upon a high plane of importance. We study digestion in order that our days may be long in the land which the Lord has given us—in other words, that we may avoid going home as long as we possibly can. For (horrible thought to your gourmand or gourmet!) in the happy land above there will be no stomach to bother about. In short, Christian training and efforts nowadays are based upon the assumption that they are going to live for ever in the way that they do on earth. This forms an ill preparation for another type of existence of which none knows the environment except in a hazy, unscientific, religious kind of way.

All the Christian knows, or professes to know, is that he is going to have a good time when he is dead. It is a big assumption. Man is an egotistic animal, but the Christian surely has carried egotism to such a point that a hearty laugh should dissolve his pride

and the presence of modesty bring a blush to his cheek. Is it not a *part* of the Good News that Jesus brought to light that this eternal life, unless he is very, very careful, is going to be extremely unpleasant. Yet one can go up and down Christendom in this year of Grace and never find a Christian who professes a doubt as to the reward he is going to receive for being a Christian. "Who go to Hell?" asked Colonel Ingersoll, and did not wait for a reply. He gave it himself. "Tramps."

With the Christian it is always *the other man* who is unfortunately going to Hell. For him there is going to be indubitably a good time. This fact looms so large in his intellectual make-up that he can even view with equanimity the tramps' going to Hell. They have gone off the rails, these mental, moral and doctrinal tramps; they sadly, and undoubtedly, deserve their fate. They have gone a lusting after strange sects. They have allied themselves with the Rollers, Shakers, or Quakers. Or they have cast loving eyes on the Whore of Babylon. But the Christian has adhered to the religion he learnt at mother's knee. He knows nothing about the maternal mummeries; in the vast majority of cases he couldn't utter a couple of sensible sentences in their defence. But he knows it means *Heaven* for Him, and *Hell* (Oh no, not a hot hell, that is uncivilized and obsolete, but all the same, a very, very unpleasant place, where the Divine Vision will be obliterated) for all others who may have picked up damnable heresies at their mother's knee.

Yes, it is plainly just that he should have a good time; and the Bolshies, the Atheists, the heretics, a bad time. God, he knows, did one sensible thing; he made one man about whose fate there was no possible, probable shadow of doubt. For him, there is a Heaven, where the atmosphere is salubrious; where the company is going to be the company he would have chosen; where his wife (if she, poor soul, is lucky enough to reach the Promised Land) will have been purged of all her iniquities. She will have learnt by then not to answer back; not to destroy his newspaper; not to cook for dinner once a month, *fish*, which he cannot bear. Oh, it will be beautiful in Heaven with a wife like that. Alleluia!

Vanity of Vanities, all is vanity! So said the Preacher. Egotism sticks out in mankind and womankind as plainly as the nose on Cyrano de Bergerac. But of all types of egotism surely Christian Egotism is the most contemptible. So conscious is the Christian of his own importance that he knows he has qualified for the best that is going on the other side of the grave. His faith in this is enormous. So pleased is he that he is willing to Praise God incessantly for he has this proof that God is Good. He is willing to put up in God's honour huge Cathedrals (nearly, but not quite, as wonderful as an ant-heap) for he knows that God is good in having prepared Heaven for him. He knows God needs Praise, Adulation, Incessant Thanks. For, if he has been now and again moved by generosity, and has sent a humble employé for a week to the seaside to recruit his health, he has expected to be thanked. He *likes* thanks, and as he has been made in the image of God he knows that God likes Thanks. God, the eternal, the unmade, who is and ever was, the one Being of whom it must be said, if anything can be said, that thanks can never be due!

In such terms John Smith thinks about Going Home—if he thinks at all. However pleasant a time it is going to be, it does not prevent him from stopping out late. He avoids going through the door to attain to the Felicities, whereas an invitation from even a Mr. Chamberlain to a cup of tea or a cocktail would not lead to any "putting off." There would be a sprint for the entrance. There once was a time,

we are told, when large numbers of Christian died with happiness, in a great and glorious hope. That time, if it ever was, was long, long, ago. A belief of that kind might have led to an occasional Christian martyr leaving very sensibly a vale of tears for the Elysian Fields. Nowadays when we hear of Christians dying* we hear of their fellow Christians *mourning*. They do not sing:—

Praise God, Praise God! Our God of Love!
A hundred Christians gone above!

When an Archbishop dies, do Christians rejoice? When a Minor Canon, a man of piety and refinement, dies at the age of 84, do Christians rejoice? Do his Christian brethren say: At last he is rid of the burden of the flesh. He is enjoying the Divine Vision. He is at one with God?

Do they do this? They do not. They *mourn* for him, and one ounce of humanity is worth a ton of ghostly comfort.

T. H. ELSTOB

* E.g., the Thetis disaster.

Pious Lying

CHRISTIAN: "What a deplorable state the world is in. In the days of my youth agreements between nations were treated as sacred, and their terms were observed both in the spirit and the letter, in fact they were carried out by all the parties interested in a spirit of true Christianity. Nowadays, alas, they do not appear to be worth the paper they are written on. How do you account for the change?"

Sceptic: "If your question were addressed to, say the Dictators, they would assure you that whenever they had repudiated their solemn pledges they had done so with a view to benefit their countries, and that it is the bounden duty of all rulers first to consider the welfare of their subjects regardless of the truth, or of any agreements existing between their countries and others."

C.: "But a lie is a lie, even if its intention is the attainment of what some may consider a laudable object, and is indefensible."

S.: "I agree. Do you not think that the common Christian lie for the greater glory of God is equally reprehensible?"

C.: "What do you mean by a Christian lie?"

S.: "I refer mainly to such untruths as have been, and are still being disseminated in Christian literature as, say, Haeckel's alleged forgeries, Pain's and Voltaire's alleged death-bed agonies, the spurious accounts of the lives of the saints and martyrs, the lies continually being told by Catholic writers of Protestants and vice versa, and the type of religious tit-bit frequently regaled to the public of which the following abridged version may be taken as an example: 'Once upon a time a cannibal on the point of slaying a missionary was instantaneously converted to Christianity by the latter having the presence of mind to play on his violin a hymn entitled Washed in the Blood of the Lamb.' However fantastic these lies, once they appear in a religious organ they are often repeated in others, and after a time are accepted by the faithful as indisputable truths. The fact that a paper copies them from another does not in the least condone its offence. It is conniving at the dissemination of lies. It may be that, generally speaking, the circulation of the Christian lie is not so common as it was, say, fifty years ago, but this is due more to the restraint imposed on the writers by the increasing Free-thought criticism of their efforts than to any desire on

their part to confine themselves strictly to the truth."

C.: "But is not the aim of these writers a pious one?"

S.: "Lying and piety in double harness! Is not such an alliance indefensible?"

PRO REASON

Acid Drops

No one can question the honesty of a British Prime Minister. Particularly when the last two have, with their hands on their hearts, given the world the assurance that they were both honest men and incapable of deceiving the House of Commons. But that being granted one must assume their lack of insight and intelligence to be almost miraculous. Following the loudly-advertised part played by Mussolini in fomenting and helping the Franco insurrection in Spain, we now have Hitler's public avowal that from July, 1936, he sent men, money and munitions to Spain, and that but for that help Franco would have been hopelessly defeated. Both of them had joined Britain in a declared policy of "non-intervention."

In the circumstances we cannot expect the Government to be acquainted with the news published in the English press for June 7, that Hitler is now demanding from Jews who have escaped to Tanganyika, payment for the blackmail levied on their relatives who are still in Germany. Non-payment means more torture to those who are still in the grip of the gangsters. This species of robbery is being practised on those who have escaped to places other than the one named. The Hitlerian "fifth column" work hard in this country.

Both British Prime Ministers did what they could to maintain non-intervention—which consisted in doing all they could do to prevent the Spanish Government getting any help, and even submitting to British ships being sunk and British sailors killed by Mussolini's guns and Hitler's aeroplanes. But neither Mr. Baldwin nor Mr. Chamberlain knew anything of German, and very little of Italian intervention. We cannot believe that two self-certified lovers of truth would have told the British People a lie; but what unutterable simpletons they must have been not to know what newspapers were publishing, that German planes were identified, and the war in the Peninsula was just a preparation for the combined Italian-German assault on Britain. The Germans and Italians boast that the experience gained in Spain will enable them better to enter into war with other countries. And everyone but our two upright and honest—completely honest—Prime Ministers knew this all the time. What about trying two confessed rogues for our next Prime Ministers? Honest ones appear to be a very expensive luxury.

Mussolini has been most obliging in the detailed information he has given. One hundred thousand Italian soldiers were sent to Spain within four months of the opening of the war. Thousands of tons of ammunition were sent, the number of Italian naval vessels on duty are now given. And neither Mr. Baldwin nor Mr. Chamberlain, nor Mr. Chamberlain's sister-in-law, Lady Chamberlain, who was in constant touch with Mussolini, knew anything about the Italian help given! Such innocence in a wicked world is quite refreshing.

Lancashire and Yorkshire Baseball League doesn't quite know how to deal with a custom set up by the Rochdale Greys team. This team is composed of Mormon missionaries, and when the game is going against them they hold a brief prayer meeting to give them the victory. . . . We can only suggest that their opponents, when in similar difficulties, should make a formal ceremony of swearing in unison or render a community song of choice anathemas.

Pastor of the Church of God, Egan Park, Georgia, U.S.A., the Rev. Grady Kent has been kidnapped, given thirty lashes, and warned to leave the Church, reports an *Evening Standard* correspondent. Members of the congregation believe the kidnappers to be men living near the Church, who complained that Kent's services disturbed their rest. Such a reason is hard to credit in face of the drastic punishment. Yet even in this country we can well imagine many whose feelings might incline to emulation of their Georgian brothers when they are affronted by the raucous howls of salvationists, evangelists, B.B.C. intonings, and mournful church bells. However, we still doubt that the thirty lashes were inflicted for the reason stated.

"Even if you can get your mouth round the words, they convey no clear meaning to the congregation at all," said the Dean of Winchester (Dr. E. G. Selwyn), before the Lower House of Convocation of Canterbury (May 25), concerning the "lessons" for New Year's Day when it falls on a Sunday. He also told the gathering that some lessons read in church are "dull unintelligible, and in certain cases disastrous." Another critic, the Rev. M. O. Hodson, vicar of East Ham (London), said the clergy were called on to read verses which they could not possibly understand, and which were certainly beyond the congregation. "A vast majority of our people are absolutely heathen because they do not get the proper instruction in the Christian faith," he added: "We must guard against putting off a man who comes to Church and wonders what all the noise he hears is about."

There has been an Astrologers' Conference at Harrogate and the Dowsers were there. We are not surprised at this although we had a belief that dowsing claimed to be a scientific pursuit, and needed no alliance with the stars. It was claimed at Harrogate that the dowsers would be "key people" in war time. Again we are not surprised, for in war time strange people come into their own. Mrs. Barraclough, a London dowser, told the audience assembled that the hazel twig could not only locate water; it could "twig" mines and ammunition dumps, gauge the direction in which aeroplanes were flying, and indicate the position of metals and oil springs. She told how she had "divined" her son's toy aeroplane when he lost it in a cornfield. We hold no brief for our war-office sagacity, but we *divine* that war-time key positions for Mrs. Barraclough, *et similia*, will not materialize.

Mr. Hugh Redwood writes in the *News-Chronicle* :—

About the only civic reception which I have thoroughly enjoyed was one, somewhere in East Anglica, where because I had been heralded as the author of *God in the Slums* I was received by the Mayor and the Chief Sanitary Inspector.

Probably the presence of the Chief Sanitary Inspector was accounted for by his desire to learn from one who professed special knowledge where the Finger of God was apparent in the Slums. The biblical reference to the Finger of God in Exodus viii. 19 has a particular interest for sanitary inspectors.

Epstein's new sculpture is, as usual, inspiring enlightened comment from our Daily Press. The *Daily Despatch* gives a picture of the top half of the statue, but "dared not reproduce the ludicrous and repellent middle and legs which would shock and disgust nearly all readers of the *Daily Despatch*." The editor knows his readers. H.S.M. in the same paper says "Adam is the vital primeval man struggling towards better things—clearly symbolized by the clenched hands and the face upturned passionately to the sky." The Editor knows, however, that the concrete embodiment of such symbolism would "horrify" his readers, whose faces would *not* "upturn passionately to the skies."

We see that business firms advertise in *Cycling*. The following advertisements are a sample from bulk :—

Horsham. Old Mill Restaurant, Park Street. Parties catered for; residential; open on Sundays.

Sunday Club runs through Radlett, Hertfordshire, should include a visit, outward or homeward, to Radlett Congregational Church. Services 11 and 6.30. All heartily welcomed.

The Courts of England decided recently that a legacy left to the "Oxford Group" could not be paid out because there was doubt as to the identity of the legatee. This decision has not prevented a wealthy fanatic—according to "Parade"—"leaving all his property to Jehovah, the Most High God." John McDaniel—the dead Scot—is said to have appointed his lawyers as trustees for Jehovah. It ought to be easy for the lawyers to write out a cheque for the legacy and deliver or post it to the nearest Church ("God's House"), the local grave-yard ("God's Acre") or the jail where so many of His friends have to go if they attempt to carry out some of "His" instructions.

The coming of Summer has made our humourists once more assure us that "Only God can make a tree," and we are supposed on sunny days to be glad to acknowledge that "God planted a Garden." The apple-tree that God made was a precious poor affair before the human gardener began the glorious work which has made Cox's Pippins to grow on erstwhile sour apple-trees. As to gardens—our "Gardening Columas" devote most of their space to Moles, Maggots, Slugs and Blight of various kinds. Weeds soon destroy flowerplant life unless the necessary poisons are plentifully used. The gardener to-day has to be also a Chemist. Why not admit that Only God can make the deadliest poisons we know.

Religious pilgrims to Lourdes and other shrines seem to be unlucky in the matter of accidents. One woman was killed and 18 injured when a motor-coach carrying them crashed into a procession outside Notre Dame Church, in Phalsbourg, Moselle. At Laniel, near St. Etienne, another motor coach carrying pilgrims fell into a deep ravine and 29 people were injured. But surely they could all have been rushed to the grottos, dipped in the sacred waters, and instantaneously cured? It is rather remarkable that such accidents never seem to be treated in this way. Almost always the miracle cures are those of perfectly obscure people, testified to be incurable by equally obscure but fervently Catholic doctors.

The American religious journal, *The Living Church*, has sent to the Archbishop of Canterbury a memorial asking that the Bishops at the coming Lambeth Congress "should make a clear and simple statement on the place of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Christian faith and devotion." We think this is a very reasonable request, as it must be obvious to anybody that the Church of England is absolutely hazy as to the position of the Mother of God. Is Mary the Mother of God Almighty? Or does she become the Mother of God merely because she is the Mother of Jesus? Does she hear prayers in Heaven? Does she take precedence over Jesus or God or both—as she certainly does in some of the prayers wafted up by the rival concern, the Roman Church? Which prayers are more likely to be answered, those addressed to "Our Lord," or those to "Our Lady"? We could give many more questions on the subject, but it is unlikely that the Church of England will answer them—or even those of whole-hearted believers in any way satisfactory to everybody. Only the Roman Church could, and for that one must have blind, unreasoning Faith.

The *Universe*, rather perturbed at the fact that a spectacular miracle in the case of the "man in the iron lung" has not taken place, again and again emphasizes the point that a "miracle" was not expected in his case. But why? The unfortunate man is a Catholic, he believes everything implicitly, and he went with other pilgrims to the famous shrine where he is certain that miracles take place every year thoroughly vouched for by Roman Catholic doctors, and he had a right to expect a cure. But nothing whatever has happened except, to

quote the above journal, "he was plunged into the icy cold waters of the Grotto, and after being allowed to dry he was put back into his lung feeling none the worse for his immersion." *Feeling none the worse for his immersion!* Really! Could the swindle of Lourdes have a more biting commentary?

Bournemouth has just had two Catholic churches opened by Bishop Cotter. One cost £10,000 and the other £9,000. That is how the out-of-date and dying Christian religion is being bolstered up all over the country. And need we point out again that so long as churches in this way, and at such a cost, are springing up all over the country, the work of Freethought is more necessary than ever?

Vienna has to submit to an anti-religious-uniform law, for in future all priests and nuns must wear ordinary clothing in the streets. This will knock out most of the "holy sanctity" business surrounding them for no one could possibly credit a man or a woman as being of the Lord in ordinary dress. It is much the same with the Bible. Re-write it in ordinary newspaper English and its "sanctity" goes with the wind. It is the uniform which keeps up the martial spirit, or the religious spirit, or that of dictators in general. Even witch-doctors are in the same boat. How the pious Viennese must love Hitler!

We are not aware what religion Mrs. Naomi Jacobs confesses—if any. But in reviewing her new book, *More About Me*, the *Star* quotes her as describing an unnamed man who "went to Lourdes and was miraculously cured." This is going beyond what even the Holy Fathers of Lourdes would hesitate to say in these days of investigation. Mrs. Jacobs will say perhaps that she only invented the story to give point to her joke that the Government, in whose employ the man had been, continued to pay his pension on the ground that he was still "totally disabled." Mrs. Jacobs apparently does not see the real point of her own joke. Governments do not waste pensions on persons who have been cured. They doubtlessly consider a Lourdes "miraculous cure" as equivalent to "total disablement continuing."

An assistant-organist at the Church of St. Albans, Holborn, has, according to the *Star*, been sentenced to prison for eighteen months in the second division. There is no particular pleasure in recording this, but there is a real reason for pointing out that members of churches are no better than other folk who seem to get on very well without religion.

Fifty Years Ago

THE BRUNO CELEBRATION

PAPA PECCI declares that this Bruno business is worse than the calamity of 1870. That bereaved the Papacy of its temporal power, but this is a blow at its spiritual power. He himself was too much cut up to do more than pray, but the clerical party issued a screaming circular, from which we make the following extract:—

"The scandal about to be perpetrated in Rome wounds and vexes every Christian soul. Bands of miscreants, bearing the black livery of Satan, are assembling in this sacred city—the centre and heart of Christianity. With impious eagerness they applaud the erection of a monument which, in this city of Rome, will be a permanent insult to God, to Christ, and to his Vicar on earth. The mind shudders at the horrible idea; but if the hearts of the faithful are pierced with grief, how much more profound and dolorous must be the grief of the common father of the faithful—the Sovereign Pontiff Leo XIII."

Even the Ultramontanes of Austria were set foaming with rage. The Bishop of Linz ordered prayers to be said "in expiation of the outrage," and the clerical *Vaterland* denounced the inauguration as scandalous and as a *fête* worthy of the Devil.

The Freethinker, June 16, 1889.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

A. H. STONE.—Thanks for cuttings.

We regret the article *A Great Humanitarian* was published last week without a signature. The author was Edgar Syers.

All Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to "The Pioneer Press," and crossed "Midland Bank, Ltd., Clerkenwell Branch."

The "Freethinker" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to this office.

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

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and not to the Editor.

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

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—

One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.

The offices of the National Secular Society and the Secular Society Limited, are now at 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Telephone: Central 1367.

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

Sugar Plums

The Report of the International Congress of the World Union of Freethinkers held in September of last year, has now been issued. The reports of the speeches of the Sessions of the Congress, the Sunday meeting at the Scala Theatre, and the Dinner at the Trocadero Restaurant run to 106 pages. In addition there is an introduction of eighteen pages written by Mr. Cohen, giving a very essential resumé of the events that led up to the Congress and its effect the announcement of its sittings had upon Christian and Political organizations. It is excellent value and cannot be dispensed with by those who are interested in the history of English Freethought. The paper edition is One Shilling, post free 1s. 2d.; the cloth edition, 2s. 6d. post free 2s. 9d.

Severe censure by local "big wigs" has fallen upon members of the Bradford Branch of the N.S.S., following their action in enforcing a local by-law, and thus preventing a religious service being held in one of the city's parks. A full account of the incident appears elsewhere in this issue, but the brief facts are that the Bradford Branch, insisting upon observance of a Park's by-law, had a religious ceremony removed from a public park to a field, thus securing equality of treatment, and no privilege for religion in regard to using the parks for propaganda. The significant feature of the whole affair is that the organizers of the service were prepared to ignore the by-law, and when they were compelled to observe it they fiercely attacked the Secular Society, alleging that it had interfered with National Defence in connexion with which the service was to be held.

We seem to be able to detect in this attitude of Bradford big wigs a trace of that very Nazism which National Defence is preparing us to oppose—or is it? If laws designed for equality of treatment are to be ridden over

rough-shod in the interests of National Defence, or religious privilege, we might as well not trouble to prepare. National Defence cannot be made an excuse for depriving people of their liberties, nor for the strangling of by-laws involving important principles. The action of the Bradford Branch of the N.S.S. in insisting upon equality of treatment was in exercise of those democratic rights which make life so much more tolerable in this country, as compared with those countries against whom, we presume, we are preparing to defend ourselves.

The Rev. T. H. Edwards was summonsed at Sheffield for creating an obstruction near a Labour Exchange. The defendant pleaded that he was holding a religious meeting, and the magistrate dismissed the case. We are very suspicious of these charges of obstruction, taken generally, and we are left wondering whether the case would have been dismissed had it been a Freethought meeting, or some very heterodox gathering that was in question. So far as the report goes the plea for the defence was as stated. Religious speakers are very often counted as licensed offenders.

One need only notice the licence given to the Salvation Army. We have many a time seen lines of traffic forced to halt or crawl by in single file because an Army meeting was sprawled half over the roadway. There is also the noise of a Salvation Army band blaring away in a quiet street, which would be at once stopped by the police if it were a band belonging to any other organization. We know of at least one case in which a driver, whose road was blocked by an Army meeting, retaliated by driving right up to the edge of the crowd and kept a very noisy horn in full blast until he got by. A policeman had the impudence to ask him to keep silence, but was offered the alternative of making a way through for the car. Eventually the compromise was accepted, and with a final triumphant blast the car went on its way.

Those holding meetings in the open-air should always bear in mind that the onus of proving either obstruction or incitement rests with the police, and in the latter case it has been legally decided that the speaker is not of necessity responsible for the disturbance. The disturbance may be caused by a member—or members—of the audience. Curiously enough this point was decided in the high courts—magistrates have a habit of following the police—in an appeal case brought by the Salvation Army.

Some neat letters are appearing in the *Dundee Courier* in reply to pious platitudinarians. We can find space for one of them:—

Sir,—When Mr. A. R. M'Farlane's forerunners in the Presbytery of Dundee murdered Grizel Jaffrey on the pretext of witchcraft they were probably as sincere men as himself, and as impervious to rational argument.

They based their action on the same infallible Bible (the specific text is there yet for all to see); they were as sure as he is that they alone could interpret the mind and intentions of Almighty God.

And yet, looking back at them, we see merely a set of bloodthirsty fanatics, whose mental stature was no higher than that of an African witch doctor of to-day.

Can Mr. M'Farlane tell us why the crazy persecutors of 1669 have slowly developed into the dounce and futile Presbyters of 1939? If he can find a better word than "evolution" to describe this, shall we say, "mellowing process," let him get on with it.—I am, etc.,

OMNIA MUTANTUR.

Following a debate Mr. Ebury had with Mr. John Barclay, the Chief Organizer of the Peace Pledge Union, some months ago, Mr. Ebury has now arranged to debate with Dr. A. Herbert Gray, on "Is Christianity a Religion of Peace?" The debate will take place on Wednesday, June 21, in the Institute, Central Square, Hampstead Garden Suburb. Tickets (free) are procurable from Mr. L. Ebury at any of his open-air meetings as advertised in the *Freethinker*, or at his address, 29 The Courtway, Carpenders Park, near Watford. The debate is timed for

8.15 p.m. The Hall is about ten minutes walk from Golders Green Tube, or can be reached from there by taking a 58 bus to Willowfield Way.

We have not read Professor Allison Peers' *Spain, the Church and the Orders*, although we are sufficiently acquainted with the author's views on the Spanish War, to believe that his views are faithfully portrayed in a review in the *Times Literary Supplement* to feel that the review is a faithful summary of his position. Professor Allison Peers' personal prejudices have, however, permitted him to write the following:—

There is, we think, no doubt whatever that, though such factors as anti-clericalism, avarice, greed and the pure love of destruction, so characteristic of Anarchism, enter into any comprehensive destruction, the underlying motive, responsible both for the features peculiar to this particular persecution [the alleged persecution of priests] and its unexampled ferocity, is hatred of God.

That kind of language is quite unworthy of anyone who wishes to establish a reputation for impartial judgment, or reliability as an historian. Anarchism, as it existed in Spain as a political or sociological theory, was anything but bloodthirsty, or necessarily associated with Anarchism of a violent type. It partook more of the quality of Anarchism as advocated by Prince Kropotkin, and indeed based itself legally upon a conception of the social nature of man that was over-flattering to human nature as a whole. To brandish a vulgar misconception of Anarchism in the way Professor Peers is alone enough to put him out of count as a reliable historian. It is too strong for even the *Literary Supplement*, long noted for its unreliability where advanced opinions are concerned.

For instance the reviewer is permitted to hint—quite gently, of course—that Professor Peers has been rash in attributing the wide-spread dislike of the Church by the people of Spain to the “anti-God” movement. The reviewer also suggests that the Church had “unduly” identified herself “with anti-progressive movements,” and exhibited a marked “solicitude for the wealthy.” When one remembers the fierce opposition of the Church to the education of the people, the hold it had on many of the large commercial enterprises of Spain, its close association with the greatest of modern royal “grafters,” Alphonso, and the amount of land controlled by the Church, Professor Peers' book reads like a piece of special pleading. And it must be remembered that it was not the *people* of Spain who defeated the Republican Government. Both Hitler and Mussolini have now declared that Italy and Germany were in it from the first, and that, but for the Germans and Italians (one ought not to forget the help given by our own Government), Franco would have been defeated in three or four months. Moreover, it needs explaining why in all these revolutions the force of a people is directed against the Church in power. A Church may be disliked by a number of people, but when it is hated by masses then any sane student of history will see in it proof positive of the ill-deeds of the Church. It is also certain that the many hundreds of schools opened by the Republicans during the war is a rebuttal of the picture drawn by Professor Peers.

The spell of real summer has enabled Mr. G. Whitehead to get some excellent meetings in the North East Area. This week, beginning on Monday (June 19) he will visit North, and South Shields, and Chester-le-Street. Full details will be found in the Lecture Notice column.

Just as we go to press we hear news of the death of an always welcome contributor, Mr. J. M. Stuart-Young. An article from his pen appears in another column, and we have one or two other articles awaiting publication, which we are sure our readers will note with extra interest. We shall have more to say next week. All we can do for the moment is to pay our tribute of respect to one whom we never had the pleasure of knowing personally, but whose work we read with considerable pleasure.

The Eternal Enigma

WALKING along the seashore at Harlech one morning last Winter, after a great storm, I came across a seagull dying on the sands. All the night a gale had raged; the sea had dashed over the land smashing a bridge just after a train had passed and washed the railway lines away in two places.

The following morning the storm had abated, and the sky was a clear blue flecked with little scanty clouds. The sun turned the sands into a radiance of gleaming gold. The sea was an iridescent sheet of glimmering blue. Behind, the Welsh mountains reared their rocky heights into the sky, and in the background the snow-tipped mountains of the Snowden range melted into the landscape. And on the yellow sands a seagull lay dying.

An R.A.F. heavy bomber purred lazily across the horizon. What a theme for a philosopher! The beauty, calm and peace of nature and the works of man—an engine of destruction. What a sermon—if it hadn't been for the seagull.

It is the old problem, the problem of evil. But it is no nearer explanation now than ever. It is problem inherent in religion. Postulate a first cause, postulate that that first cause is all-good and you have the problem of explaining why it permits evil to exist.

Religion being essentially animistic, cannot resolve this problem. For the Rationalist it does not exist—except as a problem to be overcome. Religion also, befogs the problems by its ignorance of causes. Evil being natural must be combated by natural means, and religion renders this impossible by refusing to recognize the real cause.

Human society produces its own problems. Every age, every stage in society, has its own problems. No age has been free from them. If an age overcomes them it advances a step further onward; if not, it relapses a further stage back to barbarism. No society can remain static. It must either go forward or back.

But although we hear a great deal to-day about the “Christian message” to the modern world, curiously, religion does not seek to solve or remedy this problem. Without evil where would religion be? It is at the time of personal and national disasters that religion flourishes.

We can see that to-day. There is very little formal religion, but a great deal of superstition. Never were there so many fortune-tellers, astrologists, spiritualists about.

It is a sign of the disintegration of political and social life. No one knows what exactly is going to happen, and they fall back on these crude charlatans. During certain periods of human history, there have been short periods of upheaval followed by long periods of comparative peace and tranquillity.

Humanity must solve certain problems or perish. The problems of war and peace, poverty and plenty, nationalism and internationalism must be finally decided in this century unless the world is going to sink back into another Dark Age.

Religion, as I have said, cannot destroy evil without destroying itself. Religion is conceived in ignorance, and cannot remain without perpetuating that ignorance. It is fear, fear of the unknown, that engenders religion. Explain, fill the mind with the light of knowledge, and fear vanishes; taking with it religion and superstition.

That is why religious people are reactionary. They seek to keep things as they are, the Constitution, beliefs, knowledge. They hate change because they would have to make a readjustment in their mental outlooks.

Human nature does not necessarily seek the highest

because it is the highest. Men instinctively value their peace of mind above everything. But conditions change, and men must change to meet them.

But evil as a problem is a religious problem only. In primitive times, the religious explanation of evil, that it is a visitation from God, satisfies. God is conceived as being superhuman, with every human attribute, including the worst as well as the best.

When men become more enlightened socially and learn the real nature of disease and poverty and earthquakes, they find it leaves their religion with a terrific problem. If God is all-powerful why does He permit evil? If He permits evil can He be all-good? It is a question that cannot be answered because it is a question that should never be asked. Our problems are being taken out of the hands of priests and are being taken in hand by laymen. Disease is being treated by doctors; poverty by the social reformer, crime by social and mental experts. They are leaving very little for the priest to do. Even morals are becoming a social science.

And after all this the priest falls back on a veritable evasion. All this is a great "mystery." Evil is a divine mystery too great to be understood. It is not meant to be understood. Man should not probe too deeply. He should not seek truth for truth's sake, neither should he learn anything that will disturb his simple faith. For faith is above rubies, the love of God is above all human riches and vanities, which does not explain anything. Religion cannot explain evil, it has not the knowledge; and knowledge ends by explaining religion.

But I suppose the religious will go on arguing and proving that evil is disguised good. Nevertheless, no one has ever yet explained the good of disease, of earthquakes, floods and storms, and natural catastrophes. No one has explained why the innocent suffer, why great crimes go unpunished, why these things are allowed. Can they tell the bereaved mother that it is a good thing her child has been taken away? Anyone who says that must be deficient in ordinary human sympathy. Can they look calmly at the afflicted? Can they gaze into the mute, glazing eyes of the dying bird and say it is the will of God?

IDRIS LL. ABRAHAM

Cause for Thanksgiving

(Concluded from page 379)

As for the physical Ascension, well, Dean Inge was so emphatic in his derision (*Liberalism in Religion*, p. 9) that every professing Christian might do worse than learn this passage by heart:—

A material body must occupy space. Since the body of Christ is not on earth, it must either be revolving round the sun, or located in some other star or planet, or poised in inter-stellar space in a temperature of minus 273 degrees Centigrade!

When a "divine" can picture the homeless body of an "ascended" human-being eternally revolving beyond the reach of any conceivable aeronaut it is time to cease discussion of the absurdity. As for the Virgin Birth, every "god" known to human annals claims that distinction.

In the *Encyclopedia Biblica* (article on "Nativity") we find the grave warning:—

For the whole birth and childhood story of Matthew, in its every detail, it is possible to trace a Pagan substratum!

Bishop Gore (*New Commentary*, p. 315) adds his rebuke against needless credulity:—

The Virgin Birth was certainly not part of the original Apostolic message!

Religion is something apart from Dogma. Philosophy will have no truck with the mysterious or the miraculous—perhaps because all life is so mysteriously miraculous. In so far as mystery constitutes the essence of any form of worship, the philosopher would refuse to worship! But both philosopher and fool must recognize that our moral judgments are utterly independent of any theological or metaphysical consideration. We see that a certain end is good, intrinsically good; we discern that certain acts are bad, socially evil; we know also that language has a meaning which is intelligible quite apart from the faith of the man uttering those words. "Thou shalt do no murder"—"Thou shalt not steal"—"Thou shalt not bear false witness": these are all ethically sound dicta, no matter from *whose* lips the commandments may come.

Religion is the expression of human experience, and it needed no divine revelation to be "felt" by Man, once he began to climb the sunlit heights of knowledge.

Therefore, for humanity taken in the lump, moral truth or falsity is always objective. Hitler believes (or thinks he believes) in something he calls Race Purity. He hates the Jews. He is Dictator over close on a hundred millions of German-speaking subjects. His moral truth is that of a pervert—but it is equally objective with the moral truth of the Christ who bade men love one another. We know, every mother's son of us, whether we are Christian or Jew, Moslem, Hindu, or Pagan, that our human ideas upon morality are the result of a very slow and painful evolution. We make our own religion; and for every one of us there lives a different god or God, according to the plane of our spiritual and mental growth. For instance, you might believe cruelty to animals wrong—but there are Roman Catholic countries where, so deeply into the ethical and moral fabric of the people has grown the vicious dogma that animals have no souls, that as a result most hideous forms of cruelty are tolerated toward the lower creation.

Every man's religion is what he lives habitually, both on the conscious and the subconscious planes of his being. The more educated, civilized (*sic*), and "cultured" we are, the more will we lean toward the gentle and the refined—but our moral judgments will, even then, be subject to all manner of hidden influences. There are degrees of moral insight, just as there are degrees of sensory appreciation of music, or poetry, or art, or science.

As I have shown, by quoting the probings of the young student at Yaba, we writers for the press have the duty of fearlessly telling the truth *as we see it!*

I look about me, therefore, upon the whole course of recent events and upon the people among whom I move—the sins, the errors, as well as the virtues, the achievements, and the grandeurs of my contemporaries; and I say that we are still confronting that everlasting difficulty—the reconciliation of the existence of Evil and Pain with the theory of a Supreme Goodness!

"Thank God"? Merely to utter those two words opens out an illimitable field of theological speculation.

Atheism is rare. Agnosticism is a question of degree. We need not necessarily deny God's existence, because we cannot see His hand in everything. In that sense, no matter what label a man may wear, there is not a human being alive who is not in some measure Agnostic—God being something so overwhelmingly mysterious that He is beyond the reach of our understanding.

The summing-up of the whole of my own lifetime's

study of all manner of religions, great and small, is that God is a symbol, because Man himself is a symbol: that He is an object of intellectual contemplation, and not a "person."

Raise thou the stone, and find Me there!
Cleave thou the wood and there am I—
Yea, in my flesh His Spirit doth flow,
Too near, too far, for me to know!

Any strict demonstration of God's existence is *not possible!*

Let it suffice that those most reverently love the Unknown who are least afraid of it—that Religion, no matter what its name, is an effort, a high and noble effort, to suggest in super-human terms those super-human realities which we seem to discern behind the Veil of the Unreal!

But to enquire into such a Dream is but to create another dream!

J. M. STUART-YOUNG

Onitsha, Nigeria.

An "Ethical Code"

"I CANNOT be satisfied . . . with Freethought until it can supply youth with the outline of a philosophy of life and a code of conduct."

Thus Dr. F. H. Hayward, in his speech at the International Congress of the World Union of Freethinkers, September, 1938 (see report of proceedings, with introduction by Mr. C. Cohen, now being issued).

To the person who tells me he *must* have some kind of ethical code to replace religion, I reply, "I do not believe you are such a blackguard. I do not accept you at your own estimate. I do not share your implication that you are incapable of decent conduct without having it written down for you in definite formulæ. And if by nature you are inherently a blackguard, as you lead me to postulate, I do not see how a book of rules is going to make you otherwise."

The only ethics of ultimate social value is decent practical behaviour as men and women, not some formulated scheme which has to be set before us and digested like the multiplication table.

For consider: a code is binding. Religion is binding (*religio* = I bind). Therefore a code and a religion have something in common: they bind. Now what is bound up does not change. The Christian scheme of things is something settled and established by revelation for all time. In its fundamentals, therefore, it cannot develop; it can only decompose. And what cannot develop cannot endure, except there be no development external to it, in which case it endures by stagnating in the absence of external forces to affect it.

Thus did Christianity endure throughout the Dark Ages of faith. When external forces were strong enough to affect it, then began the process of decomposition. The external forces were the Renaissance, the Reformation, the invention of printing and the progress of science in its many directions. The process of decomposition is illustrated in the fact that the Church which could once send men to the stake for denying the Virgin Birth can now make them Bishops.

Can a set code of ethics live and endure? Are there a great number of ethical precepts of which it can be said that they carry within them the promise of immortal application? And if the Ethicists reply that they are perfectly willing to let their ideas evolve in accordance with knowledge and circumstance, that is merely an admission that a set code is impossible.

Let the ethicists pursue their inclinations by all means. But let them not put on any airs of moral or

cultural superiority in comparison with the irreverent Freethinker, who, I have yet to learn, is less acquainted with the *science* of ethics attempted by such as G. E. Moore (*Principles of Ethics*), Durant Drake, Westermarck and others.

What philosophy, continues Dr. Hayward, is there to offer the young? "There is the philosophy of Auguste Comte, 'Positivism,' the 'Religion of Humanity'; there is the philosophy which Albert Schweitzer is creating, the philosophy of 'Reverence for Life.' These are great synthetic philosophies of love; I urge Freethinkers to combine them and use them."

My experience of Freethinkers is that they are not shoved, or as Dr. Hayward says, urged, but are amenable to reasoned argument and discussion. I trust our ethicist friends do not move in an intellectual realm where people are converted by being urged, induced, seduced or enticed.

I would call attention to Dr. Hayward's use of words. Like many others he takes "philosophy" from its recognized academic sense and speaks of a philosophy of *reverence*. Philosophy should be built on science. It is the bringing of scientific thought to bear on scientific discovery. It pools the findings of science, and draws on them in an effort to orient man in the universe. Consequently it cannot afford to be "reverent" in its approach. Philosophy is a quest for truth. To begin in "reverence" is to load the dice. If there is something worthy of reverence let it be established consequent upon investigation. Let us not adopt "reverence" as a method of finding if there is something worth revering.

Has Dr. Hayward considered the psychological meaning of reverence? It is made up of four psychological elements; namely, wonder, fear, subjection and gratitude. Each takes us back to the mental world of the primitive. In his curiosity he wondered; in his ignorance he feared. He prostrated himself in subjection. He sacrificed in his gratitude.

Then Dr. Hayward offers us Positivism, a dying creed. It was my last brief stopping place in the ascent from Christianity to atheism and materialism. But it did not lie on the main route, like Deism, Spinozism and Hegelianism. It was, rather, a cul-de-sac which led "no forrarder." I think I read everything Comte and Harrison wrote on the subject, as well as Jane Stile, and being then an indiscriminate reader, I am appalled to reflect that I waded through the entire Clotilde correspondence. I also attended a Temple and listened to the reading of uncriticized papers which stood in most unfavourable contrast to the healthy open discussion attendant on N.S.S. lectures. Nor did the *Annuaire Positiviste* give the impression of a movement fitted to fight for freedom, attack ignorance or in any way fulfil the intellectual and cultural requirements of youth.

With its heavy solemnities and solemn futilities I wondered why no one had ever dared to laugh at this "Roman Catholicism minus Christianity," replete with calendar and saints. And then "I laugh. Frankly, I laugh," came from R. D. Fawcett (*The Individual and Reality*), an atheist Idealist who made occasional contributions to British philosophy. And the object of his laughter was the *Grand Etre* and Comte.

Dr. Hayward desires, or urges, Freethinkers to "use" Positivism. I will conclude by directing attention, by quotation, to the authentic views of Positivists, and ask how they can be "used" to further the search for truth, which is the object of Freethinkers. First, Frederic Harrison: "We are not Atheists, revilers of Christianity, or Secularists who discard all religion. We have every wish to preserve

the essence of the Gospels and the essence of the Bible . . . Christianity is a real part of our religion" (*Neo-Christianity*). Comte also described atheists as "the most irrational of all theologians," but did they have the necessary understandings of atheism to dispose of it? Harrison wrote, "Positivism is emphatically not Atheism, and the last thing it would countenance is the barren task of attempting a logical disproof of God" (*Deistical Criticism*).

He also referred to Atheism as "rank" and "repulsive sophistry," and from the moral heights of his ethical code informed us that "bare materialism and Atheism have led to egotism, conceit and hardness." The ethical splendour of this accusation is on the Christian lines: the rule is given, but no examples are quoted. The atheist's morals are attacked through his beliefs. Are these the ethics Dr. Hayward would have us admire? Are these the principles of conduct he would "urge" us to adopt? And if the reply is that ethicists and positivists as individuals are not necessarily as good as their "code," then what is the use of a code which fails to improve the conduct of its devotees?

Positivism and ethicism speak of the "ineradicable" "religious sense"—usually regardless of what the professional psychologist has to say. Must we suppose the "religious sense" to account for Harrison's rather vindictive attack on those who, presumably, do not possess it? They also sanction the use of such terms as "soul," "spirit," etc., which should be removed from philosophy. They would also retain religious institutions, habits and ceremonies, relics of the barbaric past.

The Freethinker will be fully occupied trying to live up to Freethought without being restricted, guided or catalogued into somebody's "code of conduct." It is as difficult for the Freethinker to live up to his principles as for the average Christian to live down to his.

There are other aspects of Dr. Hayward's address which I hope to touch.

G. H. TAYLOR

A Dirty Business—and a By-law!

THE Bradford Branch of the National Secular Society has recently perpetrated an act which constitutes a "dirty piece of business"—or at least, so say some of the leading lights of that august city, which at Whitsuntide gave hospitality to the N.S.S. Conference.

How dirty that piece of business was we shall see as we read, and we might ultimately conclude that the dirty business was not done by the Bradford Branch of the N.S.S., but was actually prevented by that organization; because what constitutes "dirty business" in the eyes of some religious people is often determined by the extent to which it affects their particular interests.

Briefly, the dirty business consisted of putting the law into effect in such a manner that it operated as effectively against a religious organization as it would have been operated against the Secular Society, if the Secular Society had had the impertinence to presume that it could brazenly and openly arrange to break the law in the same fashion.

On Thursday, June 1, an advertisement appeared in the *Bradford Telegraph and Argus*, stating that a religious service would be held on Sunday, June 4, in Peel Park, Bradford, as a preliminary to a Defence Week Campaign. The Bradford Branch of the N.S.S., however, alert to the by-laws governing local parks, met hurriedly to consider the situation, and decided to draw attention to this proposed breach of by-law. This was done by writing to (1) the Town Clerk, as legal guardian of citizens' rights (2) the Chief Constable, as the responsible officer for law and order, and (3) the Ven. Archdeacon Lowe, who was to conduct the proposed religious service.

These letters pointed out that the religious service, if held, would be a breach of by-law, and would establish

a precedent under which other organizations might claim the same privilege as the church of breaking the law; and also demanding that the rights of citizens, as vested in these by-laws, should not be encroached upon by a privileged organization.

It appears that hurried consultations took place among the people concerned in the gathering, and the Town Clerk and the Chief Constable both upheld the Bradford Branch's interpretation of the by-law, according to newspaper reports which appeared later. So, being left no alternative but to acknowledge the legal position, the people responsible for the religious service made arrangements to hold the service in a field close to the park.

So far so good. The Bradford Branch had no particular objection to a religious service being held—the question of using the public parks improperly, and especially of allowing the church to steal a privilege for which others would be run out of the parks, was their only concern, and their protest, made in a proper manner, and supported by the authority of the law and the legal rulings of the Town Clerk and the Chief Constable, had its effect.

As some newspapers and some of the "big shots" in the city loosely and unfairly described the position, the service was banned as a result of an objection by the Bradford Secular Society. The obvious position was, of course, that the park service should never have been arranged in the first place, as the by-law existed before the Bradford Branch raised the question.

Then came the anti-climax—and one would have thought, from the torrent of abuse and the angry and unfair comments that were made by public men who ought to know better, that the Bradford Branch had actually passed the by-law themselves for the purpose of banning the park service.

The news column of the local press were thrown open for at least three columns of comment on the matter, and in a typically Christian manner all sense of decency and restraint was thrown to the winds by the commentators.

Eight lines, however, represented the opportunity given to the Bradford Branch to argue its side of the question, but those eight lines would no doubt, in the minds of fair-thinking people, carry more conviction by their sincerity and honesty of purpose than all the rantings of the City Fathers, who had been hoist on their own petard.

In fairness to the *Bradford Telegraph and Argus*, let it be said that their leading article on the question was a model of reasoned argument (except for a cheap kick at the Secular Society), and this leader must, by its logic and reasonableness, have made the expostulating City Fathers feel somewhat ashamed of their own stupid, unfair and illogical comments.

The Lord Mayor (Alderman T. J. Robinson) made a ridiculous farce of his high office of chief citizen, entrusted with the safeguarding of the whole of the citizens' rights and the carrying out of by-laws, by suggesting that the complaint and objection was "miserable," and by stating, "I was not consulted on this matter, and if I had been I would have been rebel enough to say that it is absolutely ridiculous. This is a matter of national importance."

Well, Bradford's Lord Mayor evidently still has to learn that a religious service is not a matter of national importance—and it does no credit to his high office to hear him belittling the importance of a by-law which he is in office to carry into effect.

The trouble really was that the Secular Society had shifted the religious service lock, stock and barrel into the field in which, if it had to be held at all, it should have been held in the first case; and the "winking at by-laws," which has occurred on a previous occasion, had been thoroughly exposed.

Alderman Sir Anthony Gadie, who was formerly a Member of Parliament for Bradford, and who certainly, as an ex-National Legislator, ought to have more respect for the law, also made strong comments, and accused the Secular Society of not having much notion of common fairness. But if we know anything about Sir Anthony (who certainly does not lack courage) he would have been among the first to pitch out the Secularists if they had dared to invade the peaceful confines of a public park with their particular form of propaganda—so what

is sauce for the goose must be sauce for the gander also.

For sheer, crass, contradictory stupidity, however, it would be hard to beat the reported comments of Mr. Louis Jessop, who is Chairman of the Parks' Committee. The very chairman of the very committee that has the very by-law, according to the *Bradford Telegraph and Argus*, described the action of the Secular Society as a "dirty business!" Thus are our by-laws respected by our municipal administrators. Up to the time of writing not a single councillor's voice has been raised in support of the putting into effect of the by-law of which the Council is custodian.

Mr. Jessop went on to say (again according to the newspaper), "It has gained them nothing. They have shown, of course, that the law must be observed, but there are many breaches of the law for which no one is any worse."

Ye gods! What a judicial sense some Bradford councillors have.

Now let us look for a moment at the historical position. This "unimportant by-law," which some think ought to have been set aside for a religious service, was actually passed by the Council as a result of religious propaganda. So jealous were the denominations of each others' park propaganda in days gone by that squabbles and petty bickerings arose, and a wiser Council than appears to exist to-day decided to protect the public by passing this by-law to preserve the amenities of the public parks from the distractions of propagandists. No doubt when all were excluded the religious organizations were all more or less satisfied—but how they howl when the Secular Society gives them a dose of their own medicine!

Just think, Sir Anthony, My Lord Mayor, and Mr. Jessop. If the boot had been on the other foot, and the Secular Society had been the frustrated party, instead of the church, wouldn't you have described this piece of "dirty business" as a very smart job? We think you would. Circumstances alter cases.

And now to justify the action, and to explain something that would probably not be published in the local press in defence of the action. Criticism was made that the Secular Society should have waited till the event was over, and then drawn attention to the matter instead of upsetting the apple cart at the last minute. Well, it was necessary to be at the last minute because the service was not advertised until the Thursday before it was due to take place. As for waiting till afterwards—let us tell you a story.

In 1931, when the Great Historical Pageant of Bradford was being held, a religious service was advertised to take place in Peel Park. The Bradford Secular Society met on that occasion, and although it was recognized that the affair was a contravention of by-law, it was decided to be moderate, and to let it go, protesting after the event in the hope that there would be no repetition of the abuse. When the subsequent letter was put before the members by the Town Clerk at the Council Meeting (observers in the public gallery testify) not a voice was raised on the matter, and somebody gallantly moved next business. As this was the result of being moderate in the challenge to religious privilege it was decided to be more practical next time it happened. It seems the more effective way, and we hope the Bradford lead will be a happy inspiration to other Branches to do and dare—and thus achieve.

F.J.C.

Correspondence

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN THE ARMY

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—Since the National Government has introduced Conscription for men aged 20, under the pretext of opposing Fascist aggression, it cannot, therefore, reasonably oppose the desires of the people for democratization of the armed forces. Amongst the first measures that must be pressed for are complete religious freedom, the right to receive and to read literature of one's own choice, abolition of compulsory church parades, and promotion to be by merit alone.

CHRISTOPHER BRUNEL.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON

INDOOR

PEACE PLEDGE UNION, The Institute, Central Square, Hampstead Garden Suburb, 8.15, Wednesday, Debate—"Is Christianity a Religion of Peace?" *Affir.*: Dr. A. Herbert Gray. *Neg.*: Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Dr. C. E. M. Joad, M.A.—"Plato Comments on Communism and Fascism."

OUTDOOR

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

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place): 7.30, Mr. E. C. Saphin—A Lecture.

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.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH (Brockwell Park): 7.0, Sunday, Mrs. N. Buxton. Rushcroft Road, near Brixton Town Hall, 8.0, Tuesday, Mr. J. Barker.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 7.30, Wednesday, Mrs. Buxton and Mr. Carpenter. Thursday, 7.30, Mr. Saphin. Friday, 7.30, Mr. Barnes. Sunday, 3.30, Messrs. Bryant, Barnes and Collins. Sunday, 7.30, Messrs. Bryant, Barnes, Tuson, Wood and Mrs. Buxton.

COUNTRY

INDOOR

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

OUTDOOR

IRKENHEAD (Wirtal) BRANCH (Haymarket): 8.0, Saturday, Mr. J. Clayton (Burnley)—"The Great Conflict."

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

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

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

COLNE: 7.30, Tuesday, Mr. J. Clayton.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Mound): 7.0, Mrs. Muriel Whitefield—A Lecture.

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

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Albion Street): 8.0, Sunday, Mr. T. L. Smith. Tuesday, 8.0, Albert Road. Thursday, 8.0, Minard Road. Friday, 8.0, Rose Street, Sauchiehall Street. Muriel Whitefield will speak at these meetings.

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

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Stevenson Square): 7.0, Messrs. G. H. Taylor, C. McCall, Junr. and S. Newton.

MANCHESTER BRANCH (Bury Market): 8.0, Saturday. Ashton Market, 8.0, Sunday. Blackburn Market, 8.0, Monday. Chorley Market, 8.0, Tuesday. Mr. W. A. Atkinson will speak at these meetings.

MIDDLESBROUGH (Davison Street): 7.0, Wednesday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

NEWCASTLE Bigg Market): 7.0, Tuesday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

NEW YORK (North Shields): 6.30, Sunday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SUNDERLAND: 7.0, Sunday. North Shields (Quayside): 7.30, Wednesday. Chester-le-Street, 7.30, Thursday and Friday. Mr. G. Whitehead will be speaking at these meetings.

Wild imaginations form systems, which weak minds adopt implicitly, and which sense and reason oppose in vain; their voice is not strong enough to be heard in schools of divinity.—*Lord Chesterfield*

PAMPHLETS FOR THE PEOPLE

CHAPMAN COHEN

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|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| No. 1. Did Jesus Christ Exist?
2. Morality Without God
3. What is the Use of Prayer?
4. Christianity and Woman
5. Must We Have a Religion?
6. The Devil
7. What is Freethought? | No. 8. Gods and Their Makers
9. The Church's Fight for the Child
10. Giving 'em Hell
11. Deity and Design
12. What is the Use of a Future Life?
13. Thou shalt not suffer a Witch to Live
14. Freethought and the Child |
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"Freethinker" Endowment Trust

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.

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