

# THE FREETHINKER

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Views and Opinions

Sunday Observance

The Chairman of the London County Council has thrown a bomb into the ranks of the narrowest, the most bigoted, and essentially the most ignorant section of British Christians. He asks for no less than the opening of Sunday Cinemas all over the country. The L.C.C. has authorized the opening of Sunday Cinemas since 1911, and Mr. Stamp now asks that the permission shall be made general all over Britain. He says:—

As one interested in religious practice and education I do not conceive it to be a service to religion that those who do not desire to observe certain formalities in religion should be forbidden to enjoy certain forms of recreation of their own seeking. Attending a cinema is not an irreligious or anti-social act. Therefore it is not sinful.

The statement is a little confused, but Mr. Stamp means well. Religious practice and education—at least in this country—are, on the whole, decidedly against Sunday entertainments of any kind, save those provided by Church and Chapel. If a vote were taken throughout the country it is likely there would be a large majority in favour of Sunday closing of all places of entertainment on that day. It is due to local majorities that in many places Sunday entertainments are permitted, but there are large industrial areas in which cinemas are still closed compulsorily, and in counties such as Cornwall and Devonshire the closing of cinemas is still the very general rule. And the overwhelming majority of the "black army" is dead against all reasonable entertainment on the "Lord's Day." Their objection is partly traditional, partly professional. They object to Sunday opening because they are trustees of one of the most demoralizing customs to which a civilized people ever submitted. And they object for professional reasons—often openly avowed—that if Cinemas are opened it will tend to still further empty the Churches. They insist that whatever performances are permitted on Sunday ought to take place in Church or Chapel, with parson or preacher as the star per-

former. The cinema, they say, draws people away from places of worship. Given the absence of clerical pressure, how many of the population of Great Britain would not prefer a cinema to a chapel? The clerical opposition to Sunday opening is the most flagrant, the most impudent exhibition of professional greed and interest, disguised in ethical and religious clothing, with which we are acquainted.

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Sacred Stupidity

Why, asks Mr. Stamp, should people be forbidden to enjoy certain forms of recreation of their own seeking? There is no justifiable reason for the prohibition; but there is a complete religious one. And religious reasons do not, to the modern mind, rest upon grounds of social or ethical justification. The belief in a "sacred" day, literally a day devoted to god, rests on no other and no better foundation than does the belief in sacred stones or sacred books. There are "sacred" days apart from the Bible and the Christian religion, but in this country the sacred day owes its persistence, and its evil influence entirely to the Bible and the Christian Church. There could be no justification in either physical or mental welfare for so completely demoralizing an institution. It was an example in practice of the "Thus saith the Lord" complex; and belongs to the same group of influences that gave us blasphemy laws, which made an expression of disbelief in the Bible, or in the divinity of Jesus, or in Christian doctrines in general a matter of imprisonment and torture. The evil influence of this sabbath is writ large on the annals of the past three hundred years. In its very infancy the suppression of the Sunday village games led to a quickly noticed increase of drunkenness. What else could follow? Human nature will not be wholly denied. Some outlet must be found, and where no healthy outlet is provided an unhealthy one will serve. Charles the First was one of the earliest to call attention to the increase of evil behaviour as a consequence of the suppression of the Sunday games. Travellers in England in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries noted the miserable body and mind depressing effect of the British Sunday. And the justification of all that has been said or could be said of the evil of the Puritan Sunday is found in the fact that from one end of the country to the other there is the universal testimony of the police as to better behaviour in the streets in proportion as there have been created more varied opportunities for physical and mental recreation on the "day of rest."

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Absurdity and Injustice

It is, therefore, to be regretted that Mr. Stamp did not plainly advocate the opening of Sunday Cinemas all over the country without any qualifying conditions or implied apologies to sabbatarians. And even

then it would be only stating one part of a much larger and much-needed reform. Is there any greater or stronger reason for Sunday opening of cinemas than there is for the Sunday opening of Museums and other places of entertainment? Why must we continue the idiotic method of declaring a thing wrong on Sunday that is right from Monday morning to Saturday night? Is it not almost criminal to shut up a museum or an art gallery, or a reading room on the one day in the week when the vast majority of people have the opportunity of visiting these places? And there is the question of public recreation and games. Why do we permit the clergy to have their way in closing so many playgrounds on Sunday for fear they may be robbed of many clients when our children reach maturity? Why is it wrong for a child to play in a public park on Sunday or for boys to play cricket or football, but perfectly good for them to do so on the other six days of the week? Is there any reason for this other than the belief that we ought to obey this out-of-date oriental superstition?

One can hardly expect it of a Chairman of the L.C.C., but one wishes he had accompanied his rather inadequate plea for Sunday cinemas with a protest against the Chicago-like racketeering policy of the Government which levies a special tax upon the Cinema that opens its doors on Sunday. Beer and tobacco are taxed, but the tax is universal on all who smoke or drink. There is an entertainment tax, but that falls upon all places of entertainment whenever they are opened. But in the case of Sunday Cinemas there is not only the tax to pay, there is also, in the true Chicago style, a "rake off" of so much per cent on the Sunday takings. It is the true gangster method, carried out by complacent politicians in order to placate an unscrupulous priesthood.

It may be noted that under the old Sunday law there was nothing to prevent a cinema opening on Sunday—provided that some seats were free. I believe that this would still hold good at law, and if cinema proprietors had the pluck they could open their theatres and tell the Sabbatarians to go to the devil. The law is against charging for admission only, but with a mere handful of seats free, all the rest could be sold as reserved. I was several times consulted by cinema people who wished to open on Sunday, previous to the passing of the present Act, and advised them they could legally do as suggested. Why did they not adopt the plan? The reason was, again, fear of religious bigotry. They were afraid of the hostility of the clergy, who might stir up the police to so harass cinema proprietors, that their business would become almost impossible.

Some years ago when I was booked to lecture at Plymouth, I found on my arrival, on Saturday evening, that the proprietor of the Cinema that had been hired for the Sunday evening meeting, had received a visit from the police, and the kindly intimation given him that letting the hall to the N.S.S. might go against a renewal of his licence. The proprietor took the hint, and gave notice that the hall would not be open. I visited the proprietor, found him in no way opposed to the letting, but, he explained, he could not stand against the hostility of the police. I promised him an action for damages if the doors were not opened. He was a decent kind of man, and so I agreed to pay a visit to the police to see what was meant by the threat. Naturally the police denied there had been a threat, they said it was just a warning that the proprietor might create prejudice. I declined to accept the plea, and promised trouble for the police unless they assured the proprietor that there would be no official interference in the management of the theatre as a consequence of having let the place for a secular meeting. So the matter ended; but it is

a sample of the way in which bigotry and religious vested interests work in this country.

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#### The Evil the Gods do live after them

The Sunday question is really more important and goes much deeper than most people imagine. It is, to begin with, a living embodiment of the nature of religion and its influence on social life. It rests on the most primitive, the most intelligible, but the least intelligent of superstitions. There is no form of superstition more primitive than the belief in "sacred" things—stones, trees, buildings, and so forth—that are reserved for the gods, dictated to their use. In this matter the devout Catholic hugging a crucifix brings us at a bound to the lower levels of human life. And the University man treasuring a mascot, the man who talks of, and believes in his lucky day, or credits the fantastic power of numbers, the reading of character or destiny by the stars, or the power of prayer to cure the sick, is only one step behind the relic-worshipping Roman Catholic.

Next, the Sunday question is an example of the manner in which established superstitions thwart the development of a healthier social life. It is in the name of an interested and inherited superstition that our museums and art galleries and playing fields were for so long closed to the people who needed them most, and who were driven to seek dubious pleasures and entertainments because they were denied access to better ones. Generation after generation at the door of each of our public institutions was placed the statue of an ugly oriental idol with the command "Thou shalt not—," forbidding the people to enter into what should have been their most treasured possession.

Finally, for the present, one could not find a better illustration of how much a century of Freethinking has done for the people than in the gradual growth of a more liberal day of rest. For the secularization and rationalizing of Sunday was wholly Freethinking in its initiation, and very largely in its development. The early Sunday societies were almost entirely the product of Freethinking. The agitation for greater and greater liberty has kept pace with the growth of Freethinking influence. And even now, it is in the most sincere of Christian circles that this same superstition of a "sacred" day finds its sustenance.

The youth of to-day has stepped into a greater inheritance than awaited their near ancestors. It finds itself in childhood liberated from the terror of hell and the devil that was once used to their terror and mis-education. It also finds itself with the freedom to spend Sunday in an enlightened and an enlightening manner with the world of nature open for their enjoyment, and the freedom to spend their day of rest, if they will, with all that is greatest and best in nature and in art. If Freethought had done no more than being the chief instrument of these forms of emancipation, it would have earned the undying gratitude of civilized mankind.

CHAPMAN COHEN

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Faith in a divine power, devout obedience to its supposed will, hope of ecstatic unspeakable reward, these were the springs of the old movement. Undivided love of our fellows, steadfast faith in human nature, steadfast search after justice, firm aspiration towards improvement, and generous contentment in the hope that others may reap whatever reward may be, these are the springs of the new.—John Morley.

## A Background of Bigotry

A merciful Providence fashioned us hollow,  
In order that we might our principles swallow.

Lowell

When found, make a note of.—*Captain Cuttle.*

THE average Christian knows nothing of the culture of his own religion, and is very hazy as to his own beliefs. And his credulity is passing wonderful. He will believe the silliest yarn in print concerning his faith, although it may have been used for generations by pious editors seeking to tickle the ears of the groundlings. He is pop-eyed at a story of a dreadful infidel death-bed, although the lie may have been printed for over a century and applied, at different times, to Paine, Voltaire, Bradlaugh, and a dozen others. His heart misses a beat when he sees a faked fragment of the Cross of Christ, or a splinter of the alleged crown of thorns. Recall the popularity in pious circles of end-of-the-world prophecies, although the prophets have been postponing the date of that dreadful disaster for near two thousand years. Remember the identification of the "Beast" in the "Book of Revelation," which has been variously ascribed to, in recent times, to Napoleon the First and Third, General Boulanger, Mussolini, Hitler, and many others. The average Christian took it all for granted. But one of the silliest of his delusions is his belief in conversion, wholesale and retail. Take, for example, some of the religious periodicals. They record the number of converts at their religious meetings. In the course of years the total is truly enormous, yet it never affects the statistics of religious membership of the various sects. Churches, chapels, tin-tabernacles, mission-tents, are half empty, and even getting emptier, but the printed conversions go merrily along, like a snowball gaining size as it rolls. One can understand paid editors of periodicals devoted to religious propaganda printing such rubbish. It is part of the sorry game in which they are engaged. But that a great daily newspaper like the *News-Chronicle* (London) should retail such silliness is extraordinary. It is still more startling to notice that this paper has a habit of doing so. In recent issues (June 12 and 15) there are two instances, both concerning alleged conversion. Here is the first:—

At his (Hugh Redwood's) meetings more than half the listeners were agnostics or unbelievers.

Mr. Redwood, it should be explained, is an evangelist, whose writings and utterances reveal as a religious backwoodsman. The suggestion in the paragraph is that the wicked infidels crowd to hear him. Now, we have a far better acquaintance with Freethinkers than any evangelist, and we know quite well that they have far better methods of using their leisure than in sitting at the feet of a man who holds such primitive views. Mr. Redwood is popular, therefore his audience was a good-sized one. We do not believe that half of that congregation was composed of Freethinkers.

How did the reporter find out that half of the listeners were "agnostics or unbelievers"? Did the evangelist ask the sceptics to stand up, so that the awed congregation could actually see what "Satan's" followers look like? Or, did the misguided ones interrupt the service, and risk a charge of brawling? Was their behaviour unseemly? Did they keep their hats on? Or, did they clutch their head-coverings, instead of putting them under the seats? The whole thing is farcical nonsense. Freethinkers do not "form fours," and go to a religious meeting to exhibit themselves as an awful warning to an audience largely composed of women and girls. Not even if the star

turn happened to be a reformed policeman or a converted burglar, let alone Mr. Redwood, whose attempts at sob-stuff theology adorn the pages of the *News-Chronicle*. Men and women who make the strenuous intellectual pilgrim's progress from Orthodoxy to Freedom are not illiterates, nor are they imbeciles. Journalists learn so many things in the course of the year. Maybe, the editor of the *News-Chronicle* will one day assimilate this useful piece of knowledge.

The second case is far more circumstantial. It occurs in a three-column article alleged to be written by a member of the Jewish faith, concerning life in a German concentration camp. The writer has occasion to mention Pastor Niemoeller, who was a prisoner there, and, after describing the conditions under which he lived, he adds:—

To date Niemoeller has only availed himself of the Bible which is always in his cell—a concession granted by order of the Government. The camp-commander is determined to make Niemoeller lose faith. For this purpose he placed a convinced Atheist and Communist in the cell next to Niemoeller and allowed him to talk to the Pastor and to take his daily half-hour's walk at the same time and in the same yard as the Pastor. The Atheist was a very intelligent man used to arguing. He had been promised all sorts of advantages if he could convert Pastor Niemoeller.

Actually both prisoners enjoyed discussing their different viewpoints. This lasted four days. On the 15th the Communist begged Niemoeller to lend him his Bible, which he said he had not seen since the day he was confirmed, but which had now assumed quite a different importance for him. The same day Baranowski had the Atheist removed.

Earlier in the article it is stated that Niemoeller's "bible" was the "New Testament." The writer of the article is said to be a Jew, not a converted Jew. Yet he writes as a Christian. He refers to this New Testament as "the Bible," which is absurd in a member of the Jewish faith. He spells atheist in small letters, and Pastor with a capital letter. And he says the "intelligent" Atheist had not seen a bible since he was confirmed, presumably since he was a mere boy. The underlying suggestion is that this intelligent Freethinker was in real danger of being converted by the pastor, and was removed, just in the nick of time, by the camp-commander. It is sheer waste of time and space to consider the matter more curiously.

What can we say of such writing as these two extracts? The *News-Chronicle* often expresses its severe disapprobation of frivolity and sensationalism in the newspaper press, and girds at its rivals for using vulgar methods of obtaining circulation. Yet, by printing these silly stories concerning Freethinkers, the editor of the *News-Chronicle* is himself not unconscious of a desire to play to the gallery. The chief difference is that his own audience is more sanctimonious than that of his rivals. There is no difference at all between the rubbish printed by the *News-Chronicle* and that printed by the so-called "yellow press." They are both vulgar and unpleasant ways of increasing circulations. The extraordinary thing is that editors should for a moment consider that such mischievous nonsense is suitable reading for a democracy who have Bernard Shaw, Wells, and the author of the *Golden Bough* to boast of. Is it not a plain case of debasing the moral currency?

In the old days great editors directed the great newspapers. They printed real news, and, above all, they were the vehicles of ideas, even ideals. When Charles Dickens edited the *Daily News*, when Douglas Jerrold directed *Lloyd's News*, when men like W. T. Stead controlled newspapers, journalism was

an honourable profession commanding respect. To-day, it is far too often a mere trade, a commercial venture, a means of making easy money. The old editors treated life seriously; they had a respect for truth and decency. Now, the trend is towards sheer sensationalism, and some of the most popular papers are composed of pictures stuck in anyhow, with hardly any letterpress. Far too often the modern editor backs an opinion as he would back a horse, for the simple reason that he believes it will win. To increase the number of his readers he appeals to the crude emotions of the ignorant and irresponsible. We much prefer the old-time editor, who made the plain citizen think about ultimate things. At least he was a man, and not a hireling.

MIMNERMUS

## The Carousel at Cana

OR

JESUS AS A VINTNER

There was a marriage at Cana of Galilee . . . and Jesus also was bidden . . . and the wine failed. . . . Now there were six water-pots of stone set there after the Jews' manner of purifying, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the water pots with water. And they filled them to the brim. And he saith unto them, Draw now and bear unto the ruler of the feast. And they bare it. And when the ruler of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and knew not whence it was (but the servants which had drawn the water knew), the ruler of the feast calleth the bridegroom and said unto him, Every man setteth on first the good wine; and when men have drunk freely, then that which is worse: thou has kept the good wine until now.—John ii. 1-12.

DR. NEBE, a learned and orthodox divine, observes in his able treatise on the birth and childhood of Jesus, that the great stars of exegesis, Chrysostom, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, and Bengel, do not stand cool and critical before the sacred text, *sondern sich mit Liebe und Eifer in den selben vertiefen und versenken*.<sup>1</sup> The conduct of these illustrious exegetes shall be ours, and therefore, waiving all profane scrutiny of the present narrative, we will proceed to improve the same reverently, for the edification of childlike and faithful souls. Let us then observe:—

I. The liberality of Jesus as manifested in this miracle.

1. The quantity of the wine miraculously produced. The six jars were filled to the brim,<sup>2</sup> and everyone of them had measures named in the Greek original *metretes*. Our Authorized Version and our Revised Version agree in rendering the word *metretes* by the word *firkins*. Hence, as a firkin amounts to "9 imperial gallons,"<sup>3</sup> and each jar contained not less than 18 gallons, the six jars held at least 108 gallons; whilst, if the phrase "two or three," really meant three, the total number was 162 gallons. Moreover, as a gallon has four quarts, there was enough to fill certainly 432, and possibly 648, quart flagons of the sort now in use. Among how many guests was this generous quantity of wine divided; and was it near the beginning, or towards the end, of the feast that the first lot of wine failed? Dr. Adam Clarke says that "the number of the pots was proportioned to the number of the guests." Dr. Macnighl thinks that the enormous size of the vessels was due to their

being employed for "such purifications, or washings, as required the immersion of the whole body," and indeed the vessels do appear to have been larger than would have been required for the handwashing practised by the Jews before meals. Perhaps it was the custom for the guests to take a ceremonial bath just before the festival began, or at the commencement of every day it lasted, and this in addition to the manual ablutions ordinarily made at meal times. As it seems unlikely that above six persons would have to wash their whole bodies in the same jar, thirty-six appears a reasonable number for the guests, but, of course, fewer may have been present.<sup>4</sup> If 432 were the number of quarts, then, each guest could have twelve quarts; whilst if the quarts numbered 648, then, each guest could have eighteen quarts. One thing is certain: either the giver of the feast had miscalculated the amount of wine requisite during the whole time for the number of his guests; or else they had taken more wine than they should have taken during the period preceeding its cessation. If the wine failed not long after the beginning of the feast, the guests would appear to have drunk heavily before receiving the fresh supply; whilst if it failed towards the end of the feast, they must be thought to have got the means of drinking heavily for a short time after having already consumed the amount allotted for the entire duration of the feast. Thus it is natural to inquire how long the festivities may be supposed to have lasted. Dr. Immanuel Benzinger, in an article upon the marriage customs of the Hebrew race in Biblical times, describes the solemn bringing of the bride to her new home, and continues as follows:—

In the bridegroom's house was then held the great nuptial feast, which with the rich and great might last for seven, or even fourteen days. (*Gen. xxix. 27; Judge xiv. 14-17; Job viii. 11.*<sup>5</sup>)

Commenting upon the phrase "the wine failed," Dr. W. M. L. de Wette, a celebrated critic, says that the incident which it records occurred

perhaps on the sixth or the seventh day of the marriage, for marriages lasted several days (*Gen. xxix. 27; Judge xiv. 17*); but according to verse ten, the failure seems to have come in at the end of the feast.<sup>6</sup>

The verse referred to is that wherein the ruler of the feast says unto the bridegroom, "Everyman setteth on first the good wine; and when men have drunk freely, then, that which is worse: thou hast kept the good wine until now." This passage certainly implies that considerable time had elapsed between the moment when the feast was "first" in being, and the moment expressed by the word "now"; whilst it also implies that during the interval so much wine had been drunk that the drinkers would not have been able to perceive the difference had they been served with an inferior vintage instead of the superior one now offered. If it was a 14 days feast, the guests might have lacked wine for the final week; and, if it was a 7 days feast, they were not only spared a brief abstinence, but also endowed with a rich superabundance.

2. The quality of the wine miraculously produced. As the feast was in progress, and the original supply of wine had already been consumed, an increasing gaiety and a diminishing gustative capacity, must, as

<sup>1</sup> *Die Kindheitsgeschichte unseres Herrn Jesu Christi nach Matthäus und Lukas ausgelegt*. Stuttgart, 1893.

<sup>2</sup> Whether the jars were wholly empty or partly full, before being completely filled, cannot be determined.

<sup>3</sup> Nuttall's *Standard Dictionary of the English Language*, London, 1929.

<sup>4</sup> The account says that among the guests were the mother, and the brethren of Jesus, and his disciples, these last the author in the preceding chapter limits to four persons, Andrew, Peter, Philip, and Nathanael. As for the brethren whom Jesus had, Matthew (xiii. 55) and Mark (vi. 3) mention four, to wit, James, Joseph (*alias* Joses), Simon, and Judas. Thus, we know ten members of the party by name.

<sup>5</sup> *Ency. Bib.* Vol. III. Col. 2945.

<sup>6</sup> *Das Evangelium Johannis* [abridged edition] Halle, 1887, p. 379.

the ruler of the feast delicately observed, have rendered the drinkers less sensitive to the taste, and less responsive to the effect, of the wine in their goblets. Hence, although it involved no greater effort on the part of Jesus to produce a superior than an inferior wine, yet the fact that he chose to provide a beverage more luscious, and exhilarating than the one previously absorbed, testifies eloquently to his thoughtfulness and consideration.

II. The amiability of Jesus as manifested in the present miracle. The sight of the miseries occasioned by poverty, disease, or bereavement, will often suffice to excite in those less benevolent than Howard the feeling of compassion and the will to relieve. It needs, however, a rarer and nobler heart to thrill in soft responsiveness at the joys of fellow creatures, and to seek with a tender and loving care to heighten the transports of their more adventurous delights. But the sacred heart of Jesus enabled him to ascend even this seemingly inaccessible peak of moral sublimity. At the festive board of Cana, his sympathy was excited and his wonder-working power evoked, not by the vision of poverty, disease, or bereavement, but by the prospect of a convivial scene sustaining untimely abbreviation through the failure of its most inspiring element. Here he sought, not to alleviate suffering, but to increase joy, not to supply needs, but to minister luxuries, thereby manifesting the breadth and tenderness of his compassion, no less than the princeliness of his generosity. For not only did he furnish the drinkers with a beverage sufficient in quantity to assuage their importunate thirst, but he selected one of a variety so delicious that it must have voluptuously evoked as well as copiously gratified the appetite of the favoured partakers. Clearly the morose precision who refuses alms to a vagrant lest the wanderer should expend the donative in the nearest alehouse, is no faithful copyist of the Great Exemplar! Never did the meek and lowly Jesus suffer at the hands of Jew, Turk, infidel, or heretic the complete and shameful denial that he sustains from those who, while calling upon his ever-blessed name, and professing to imitate his most holy life, would fain refuse their parched and cheerless fellows the comfort of the ruddy and inspiring cup. We hear much of practical Christianity, and the duty of trading closely in the footsteps of the Saviour; yet, divines who expatiate luxuriantly upon these themes, seek to open the temple in heaven by closing the taverns on earth, instead of copying the example of their Lord and Master by a wise and lavish ministration to the needs of the libulous. This conduct is as foolish as faithless, since the vacancies in the sanctuary would speedily be filled to repletion, if inquirers after Jesus were then regaled with potations as copious and exhilarating as those which he himself supplied to the revellers at Cana.

III. The Patriotism of Jesus as manifested in the present miracle. Bismarck is reported to have said that he hoped the day would be far distant whereon the German people abandoned the national habit of drinking beer, and adopted the English habit of drinking water. Jesus in this miracle showed himself, like Bismarck, a patriotic upholder of ancient traditions. The Jew has ever keenly appreciated the delights of sense. The fatness of the land was his promised heritage, and the fruit of the vine his dear delight. The felicities of the goblet are often celebrated by what Lord Bacon called "the pencil of the Holy Ghost."<sup>7</sup> Thus we read in *Ecclesiastes* (x. 19): "Wine maketh glad the life"; in *Psalms* (civ. 15): "Wine maketh glad the heart of man"; in *Judges* (ix. 13) "Wine cheereth God and man"; a statement confirmed in *Numbers* (xxviii. 7, 8), where Jehovah is reported to have spoken

unto the children of Israel by the mouth of his servant Moses, saying: "In the holy place shalt thou pour out a drink offering of strong drink unto the Lord." The seers Joel and Amos declare that in the golden future "the mountains shall drop down sweet wine"; and, long before their day, the patriarch Jacob, contemplating in holy and prophetic vision, the fortune of his sons, described the highly favoured Judah as:—

Binding his foal to the vine  
And his ass's colt unto the choice vine,  
He washed his garments in the blood of grapes.  
His eyes are red with wine  
And his teeth are white with milk.

There are many other aspects of this wondrous miracle at Cana, whereon we should all love to meditate, did but time permit. Since, however, this cannot be, let us make the following passage from the learned and pious Burkitt the object of our prayerful consideration. "Observe," says he,

the liberality and bounty of Christ in the miracle here wrought; six waterpots are filled with wine; enough say some writers, for one hundred and fifty men; had he turned but one of these large vessels into wine, it had been sufficient proof of his power; but to fill so many was an instance both of his power and mercy.

The lord of the family furnishes his household not barely for necessity, but for delight, giving richly all things to enjoy. And as the bounty of Christ appeared in the quantity, so in the excellency of the wine. "*Thou hast kept the best wine till now,*" says the governor of the feast. It was fit that Christ's miraculous wine should be more perfect than the natural. But, oh, blessed Saviour, how delicate and delicious shall that wine be, which we shall drink ere long with thee in thy Father's kingdom!

C. CLAYTON DOVE

## Christian Principles?

FROM time to time we hear much about conducting our lives upon "Christian principles"; also reconstructing the social basis of our commonwealth upon "Christian principles."

Shadowy journalists, who so modestly conceal their anonymity in sententious leading articles, appeal to us and to the political powers that be—for a settlement of our tangled and troubled human affairs "in the light of Christian principles."

Even Cabinet Ministers, with one eye on the church vote, prate in ponderous platitudes, oblivious of broken promises, of their political policies being "based on Christian principles."

What does it all mean? What are these "Christian principles" we talk so glibly about?

What are these *Christian Principles*? Where indeed shall be found an interpretation of "Christian principles"?

Shall we ask the one hundred and forty-one diverse Christian sects—who in some measure all differ individually—as to their interpretation of Christianity demonstrated in their Bible?

How long should we have to wait at their Tower of Babel before we received a collective answer defining Christian principles?

Shall we turn over the pages of past history and try to find from the doings and records of the Christian Churches themselves? How they applied their so-called "Christian principles" when they had power and control in the social and political life of the People? And shall we enquire of History what were

<sup>7</sup> *Essays*, No. v. "Of Adversity."

the "Christian principles" in the light of which the different churches regarded one another?

*Christianity in the Great War.* Shall we look around the world of our own generation and try to learn from the attitude of the churches when they prayed on every frontier, and blessed the instruments of destruction designed to slaughter their fellow-Christians, or how they applied their Christian principles towards the yearnings and yearnings of the common people's movements of Socialism and Communism?

Shall we turn back but one page of Russia's history and try to find some definition of the "Christian principles" of the great Greek Church in the art of Social Government as compared with Russia's regeneration by a social upheaval bereft of "Christian principles"?

Where indeed should we look for a living interpretation of what Christian principles are, better than in the internal life of the churches themselves, where professional churchmen are banded together to proclaim their "Christian principles" and to spread their gospel to us common folk?

*Do the Churches show Example?* Surely! Surely! we should find the realities of the Christian principles, in full flower in their practice, within the social and economic structure of the churches themselves, where their members have all the precious environment of ceaseless prayer and invocation combined with the ever-present Divine inspiration they claim.

Here is an extract from "a Report on the Wealth of the Church of England," that shows clearly the application of "Christian principles" within that great church:—

The total yearly income of this State church exceeds £16,000,000, yet despite this enormous annual income, the report states: "Many clergymen are so poor that they and their families have to wear second-hand clothes provided by charity; and in one case a vicar was so poor that as his wife was an invalid, he had to do all the housework, including scrubbing out the vicarage."

The inequality of incomes is amazing, and is in striking contrast to the platitudes of "the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man" preached in the pulpits.

The Princes of the Church draw salaries that range up to £10,000 and £15,000 a year, plus palaces to live in.

But even more glaring than the incomes of Archbishops and Bishops is the inequality of incomes of the rank and file of the clergy.

Owing to the appreciation of land and other properties left to the Church, some parishes provide their vicars for the cure of souls with incomes as high as £8,000 a year, but scores of livings range from £2,000 to £4,000, and oftentimes the smallest parishes have the largest incomes, but only microscopic congregations.

Side by side with this wealth, the report states that "over half of the 8,000 beneficed clergy in the Church of England have incomes of between £200 and £300—these sums being subject to deductions before they reach the hands of the incumbents."

The average curate is even worse off than the vicars. "A large number get into the hands of the money-lenders."

*Second-hand Clothes—and Suicide.* A Relief Corporation states that "in the twelve months ending April, 1938, 1143 applicants were helped with money grants, and clothing was distributed to over 3,000 people, half of them children of clergymen." The Corporation has "a special department for the distribution of second-hand clothes to poor clergy and their families."

"One Midlands vicar has a gross income of £133 10s. 8d., and after paying essential expenses, was left with £70 a year to keep four in family. He has not had a holiday for 14 years, and was wearing second-hand clothes given him three years before."

"Some of the poorest become bankrupts, and the number of those who commit suicide through poverty is causing alarm."

Comment is unnecessary! It is too eloquent of how this Church divides its own "loaves and fishes."

"Back to Christ." "But," say some unattached Christians; "you will not find Christian principles in the organization of any church—they have prisoned the Poor Christ in their churches, have manacled Him with musty creeds, bound Him fast in their rituals, doped Him with incense, deafened Him with the dronings of the Priesthood, and the responses of the congregations."

"Yes!" these insurgent Christians say: "if you want to find what 'Christian principles' are, you must return to 'The Simple Christ' of the Bible—sit at His feet and listen to the magic of His words—away from all the ridiculous pomp, ceremony and circumstance which orthodoxy has built around Him!"

Well! let us leave the churches with all their mesmeristic ceremonies and liturgies and return to the Simple Christ walking through the ripe corn, or sitting amongst the damp fishing nets—on old Peter's boat—or stand with Him at the Roadside corner with the common folk of Palestine, two thousand years ago.

Often! Often! have I tried in thought to creep back through the years and listen to the words that tradition has recorded of this strange, poetic, pathetic figure, and always! always! I have found two Christs—so entirely different one from the other.

*The Contradictions of Christ.* One, the Mouthpiece of the sweet philosophies of Confucius, of the gentle Buddha, the wisdom of the Vedas, and of the old Egyptians and Persians.

Listen to this Christ! "Love your enemies and do good to them that hate thee." . . . "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged." . . . "Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven." . . . "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." . . . "Unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek, offer also the other cheek, and him that taketh away thy cloak, forbid not to take thy coat also." . . . "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." . . . "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, neither for the body, what ye shall put on."

To children and to women, to all who suffered and shed tears, to all from whom men turned with loathing and contempt, to the girl of evil life, this Christ appeared a friend, with words as sweet as honeycomb.

Yet! there is another totally different Christ depicted in the New Testament. Listen again!

"If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters—yea! and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple." . . . "He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one." . . . "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved—but he that believeth not shall be damned." . . . "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels." . . . "But those enemies which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before Me." . . .

This Christ believed in Demonology that disease is caused by the possession of devils—and He believed in a personal Satan and an eternal flaming Hell for unbelievers.

*Can we Reconcile these Contradictionists?* How can we distil a full extract of the "Principles of Christ-

ianity" from these glowing contradictions?

Must we "take no thought for the morrow"—nor of what we shall eat or drink, or what clothes we wear? Must we at His bidding hate our wives, our mothers and our sisters and brothers? Must we believe in the flaming Christian Hell with its lakes of brimstone, where unbaptized unbelievers suffer for Eternity? Are these a part of the "Principles of Christianity" which Parsons, Premiers, Politicians and Pressmen ceaselessly, with damnable iteration, drum into our ears?

Is it not all just conventional cant—this prating pretence about "Christian Principles"?

*Why Look Through Dead Eyes?* Is it not time we ceased to look through the dead eyes of men who were supposed to have lived in Palestine two thousand years ago, and instead, look through the searchlight of Modern Science, for the way and the truth to help us to build a better world for Humanity?

Too long Truth has been imprisoned in the Hells of the past. Some happier day, Orpheus will not look back, and then lovely Eurydice will step out of the dark caverns of superstition into the sunlight of Life's realities.

HENRY J. HAYWARD,

*President New Zealand Rationalist Association.*

## Did Moses "write up" his own Funeral?

SMITH: "I have always understood that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch. What evidence can you produce to prove otherwise?"

ROBINSON: "If you will read these books, even cursorily, you will not fail to notice that the style is that of another person speaking of Moses."

S.: "Have you other evidence?"

R.: "Yes. In Genesis a place is mentioned which did not exist until centuries after the biblical time of Moses. A reference in Exodus is made to money which was not current until long after Moses died. In Deuteronomy the death and burial of Moses is recorded, the unknown writer remarking, 'but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day' and in the same book it says, 'There has not arisen a prophet in Israel like unto Moses,' obviously the statements of one writing long after the events to which he is referring."

S.: "Do you think Moses was an historical character?"

R.: "I believe he was largely a myth."

S.: "Why?"

R.: "Because the obviously mythical events in which he is alleged to have figured would have been incomplete without a principal church, and he was devised to fill the role in the same way as all heroes of mythical tales are invented."

S.: "It is claimed that Moses met God face to face. If this were so, what a unique opportunity he had of presenting to the world a delineation of the Almighty. What do expositors like Scott say about this?"

R.: "Scott throws no light on the subject. As usual when confronted by a difficulty he makes confusion worse confounded by a flood of incomprehensible jargon, just as the clergy do when they attempt to enlighten their flocks on the mysteries of the Christian dogmas."

S.: "If what is recorded in the Bible about Moses had actually happened, is it not reasonable to assume that the laws given to him would have been imposed

upon the world? A *real* Almighty would not have tolerated any opposition to his wishes."

R.: "Yes, and the results would have been disastrous. Ingersoll points out that among other calamities there would have been no public liberty in the world. Heresy would be trodden out beneath the bigots' feet. Husbands would divorce their wives at will and make the mothers of their children houseless and weeping wanderers. Polygamy would be practised; women would become slaves; we would buy the sons and daughters of the heathen and make them bondmen and bondwomen for ever. We would sell our own flesh and blood and have the right to kill our slaves, and if we laboured on the Sabbath we would be stoned to death."

S.: "How fortunate it is that these Hebraic tales are mainly the product of man's imagination."

R.: "I agree."

PRO REASON

## Acid Drops

There are two ways of evading a tax on one's possessions. One is to conceal the extent of one's income. That is called "income tax dodging," and that is punishable at law. It is a particularly contemptible offence when committed by men of moderate incomes. To conceal the extent of one's possessions and evade death duties by surreptitiously giving away money to one's family within three years of one's decease is another contemptible method of cheating the exchequer. But there are other ways that carry with them no opprobrium.

For instance, if one's estate is very, very large, then one may turn oneself, so to speak, into a Limited Company, and make the members of one's own family shareholders and directors. In this way no heavy death duties are payable, and the property, or properties, pass on untaxed by death duties. In the case of a man who dies worth, say two or three thousands, death duties must be paid by his widow. In the case of millionaires—particularly when they belong to our glorious aristocracy, things are different. They may, so far as their possessions are of the right kind, evade—we beg pardon, escape death duties altogether. The last member of the aristocracy to adopt this plan is the Duke of Devonshire, whose chief service to the country is that he is actually the son of his father, who was the son of his father, and whose family has been remarkable in maintaining this relationship from generation to generation. The Duke has just turned himself—again, we beg pardon, his estates—into a limited company. His estate will not therefore pay death duties. We hasten to say that the Duke of Devonshire is not the only one of our noble legislators who have secured their reincarnation—at least the better and most important part of them—through the agency of the company laws. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir John Simon, is adamant against limiting the increased car tax to 5s. We humbly suggest that if he paid attention to these aristocratic tax-dodgers he might be able to avoid raising the car tax—or not taxing so much other far more important items. The tax might be levied on a ducal estate whether it became a limited company or not.

Quite recently the Duke of Kent paid a visit to the workless men smallholdings at Snaith, West Yorkshire. While being shown round he asked the wife of one of the residents how she liked the life. The answer should have been that she and her husband were very thankful, and grateful, etc. Instead of that she blurted out, "Not at all. There is nothing here but poverty and hard work. We can stand the hard work, but not the poverty. We are leaving." The newspaper report says that "embarrassed, fingering the lapel of his jacket, the Duke turned to Mrs. Edna Purvey, a neighbour."

We hope that Mrs. Purvey answered in the customary stereotyped manner that everybody was very grateful, and was quite happy and thankful, etc. These people

must not expect royalty to visit them if they speak as plainly as did Mrs. Sutton. At the same time it is to be hoped that the Duke of Kent will not contract the habit which Edward VIII. developed of poking his nose into places he was not expected to see, and to talk to people who were not pointed out as fit subjects for conversation. One recalls that it was Edward's plain, and very expressive language concerning the life being led by some of the distressed people he saw, that was one of the causes of the disfavour into which he fell. If the Duke of Kent, or anyone else, wishes to know what are the real feelings and life of the people, he must go on his own—unknown and unannounced.

Even the experience of a clergyman, we have in mind the best type of man in clerical uniform, is not to be trusted. If the people visit him, they are on their best behaviour, and have a tale ready for his ears. And if he visits them, in uniform, the same criticism applies. In either case the greater number wear a mask. A doctor is a much better judge. People who are ill—really ill—do not “fake.” The doctor sees human nature as it is, in all its light and shade, at its best and at its worst. We would sooner take an intelligent medical man's testimony than all the hollow speeches made to visiting royalty and other fashionables.

The *Telegraph* informs us that “five distinguished Spanish journalists” have arrived in London for a fortnight's visit as guests of the British Council. They travelled with Mr. Tom Pears, Press Attaché of the British Embassy at San Sebastian and Senor Pablo Merry Del Val, who was head of Franco's Press Department during the last two years of the war in Spain. The visitors are the Editor of *El Diario Vasco* of San Sebastian, the Editor of *Fe* of Seville, the Editor of *Noticiero*, the foremost Falangist newspaper in Saragossa, and a few others. The editors of the Government Press are unable to be present, Franco having already seen to their happy despatch. These persons are to be entertained to an inspection of B.B.C. premises, a luncheon in the House of Commons, and a reception by Cardinal Hinsley. At the luncheon one of the uninvited guests will be Banquo's Ghost.

The general press appears to have almost forgotten that such a place as Spain exists. In any case the news is very scanty, and of poor quality. But it is well known that the “Christian gentleman” Franco is carrying out the policy of that very religious man, Hitler, and is busy wrecking vengeance on those who worked against him during the insurrection. *The Voice of Spain*, recently (June 17) published the following:—

The following news has been received direct from Madrid: Thirty-five journalists have been executed since the entry of the Nationalists. The journalists of the *Falange* never attempted to help their colleagues as the former *Agrupación Profesional* did in 1936 with those journalists who were known to be on the side of the “Nationalists.” Among those whose lives were saved in 1936 were: Federico de Urrutia—thanks to the efforts of a member of the editorial staff of *Informaciones*, and Francisco Casares, Chairman of the Autonomous Syndicate of Journalists in Madrid (what we in England would call the National Union of Journalists—Headquarters Group).

Perhaps the best known journalist to be executed is Javier Bueno—a great liberal journalist in Spain—a man whose name is very well known in all Spanish-speaking countries. He was one of England's best propagandists during the war of 1914-18.

Other journalists executed are:

Antonio Hermosilla: Editor of *La Libertad*.

Modesto Sánchez Monreal: Editor of *El Sol* (a newspaper corresponding to *The Times*, but more progressive in outlook).

Federico Moreno: Editor of the *Heraldo de Aragón*.

Eduardo Castro, Emilio Gabás (the latter ex-Editor of *El Socialista*, barrister-at-law and formerly Governor of Madrid—equivalent to Chairman of the L.C.C.).

Reported Executed:—

Rafael Henche: Famous Mayor of Madrid.

Molina Conejero: Governor of Valencia.

One would have thought that the “blunder” of the Government in its handling of the Spanish question was sufficiently obvious in the light of recent events, without members calling attention to it in this aggressive manner. But if further proof of the misdirection of affairs were needed, it is to be found in the following items of news. Miss Madge Addy, of the Spanish Medical Medical Aid Committee, has managed to get free from Franco after three months' delay on some pretext or another. She told a representative of the *News-Chronicle* (July 7), that under the new regime:—

All nursery schools and other services built up for children by the late Government have been closed and teachers deprived of their certificates.

She says that political prisoners are taken out nightly every night and shot on a piece of land at the back of the Swedish Consulate. It will be remembered that the great Christian Gentleman, Franco, in whose integrity Mr. Chamberlain had—next to Mussolini and Hitler, such profound trust, promised that only those guilty of criminality should be punished, after their surrender. Under the instructions of his Italian and German governors, Franco is carrying out his promise towards the Spanish Republicans. And the world is still paying the price for Munich.

At the New York World's Fair there is a Temple of Religions, the board of directors of which consisted of Roman Catholics, Protestants and Jews. They all agreed, by force of circumstances we suppose, that there should be no religious symbols in the Temple, that it should be undenominational, and that the programmes should consist of meetings, musical recitals, and pageants and plays. One religious critic thinks that this all sounds very dull and rather stupid. Still not quite so stupid or as dull as most religious services—if not all. Besides as there is nothing in the Temple but emptiness—that may well stand as a symbol of modern religion.

There is trouble at Teddington, Middlesex. The local hospital announced that at its Annual Carnival it would feature as one of its tableaux, a Garden of Eden scene with Eve dressed in tights and wearing a fig-leaf. This drew a strong protest from the Vicar of Teddington, who said it was deplorable for biblical characters to be put in a carnival. The Vicar should have remembered that among the early miracle plays of the Christian Church such a tableau was often exhibited, minus the tights, and the adjustment of the fig leaf was one of the “high spots” of the performance. One of the officials of the hospital rather pomposly declares that “medical science cannot admit the authenticity of the Garden of Eden,” and therefore there is nothing irreverent in the exhibit. But the official forgets that it might make some think in terms of sanity about the Bible, and it is that the Vicar dreads.

### Fifty Years Ago

Poor little Florence Newburn! She was the daughter of a single woman at Stanford-le-Hope in Essex. Perhaps her father had deserted the mother of his child, and left them both to the cold charity of the Christian world. One morning—perhaps happily for her—the child was found dead in bed. Of course there was a coroner's inquest, and a verdict of death from natural causes. The jury seem to have been anxious to talk morality but the coroner very properly cut them short. And now comes the crowning “charity.” Florence Newburn had not been baptized, and she had to be buried in the early morning in the parish churchyard without the usual rites. It was the last indignity they could offer the poor child, but fortunately she was beyond it all, with her little hands folded on her breast, sleeping her long last sleep.

*The Freethinker*, July 7, 1889

**There is a New Reader round the corner—Get Him!**



# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

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Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- A. B. PECK.—Thanks for verses, but not quite up to standard.
- H. MILLAR.—We saw your letter in the local press. It was good, and we hope had the effect on at least some of the readers that it ought to have. Keep it up.
- T. EDMONDSON.—We have had many requests to renew the series "Things Worth Knowing," which you say was excellent as a guide to books, apart from the value of the excerpts given. Many other readers have felt the same, and we will renew the series so soon as we have time to make the necessary selection.
- B. MARKLEY.—Mr. Cohen is writing you.
- J. MCKENNA.—You are quite wrong. The year is 1939 *Anno Domini*. It counts from the assumed date of the birth of Jesus Christ. Alterations of the calendar have nothing whatever to do with it.
- B. W. WESTMORELAND.—Thanks for address of a likely new reader; paper being sent for four weeks.
- J. LUCAS.—The postal authorities were quite in order. Yours was not wholly a letter containing matter for the press. It contained a personal note to the editor, and that is against the rule cited.
- J. SIBBERT.—We are pleased to hear that your meeting passed off so satisfactorily—mainly due, we expect, to the promptness and firmness of your action.

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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 Bodleian Library has arranged an exhibition of rare books under the general title of "Hocus-Pocus." One section, we understand, is devoted to early works on Witchcraft. We wonder how many who visit the exhibition will reflect on the fact that the bulwark of that vile superstition, which caused the death of hundreds of thousands of men, women and children, and which made terrible the life of a much greater number found, in the Christian world, its great authority in the Bible, and the chief obstacle to the destruction of the belief in the Christian Church. No less a person than John Wesley denounced as sheer Atheism the denial of the reality of witchcraft, and even to-day the belief is not quite extinct. Those who read the stupid cry "Back to the Bible" might reflect what back to the Bible would really involve.

In any case the belief in witches is not intellectually or morally more respectable than belief in devils and

angels, and other forms of spirit existence. The man who believes in the one might quite easily and logically believe in the other. Had the Christian Churches had their way, we should still be believers in all the superstitions with which they started their career. The disappearance of the official belief in witches and demons is one more blessing which the world owes to thought. But the work of completely wiping out the influence of these many centuries of gross superstition and inspired brutality is still in process.

There seems a very determined effort going on with the clergymen of the Established Church, and a strong section of Nonconformists, to squeeze all the help that is possible from the present Government before it goes out of office, and also to make the most they can of the present financial aid that is being given to sectarian schools. The *Times* which has in other directions served as a "kite-flyer" for the Government whenever something shady is in view, has been in its leading articles suggesting religious tests for teachers, and calling the attention of secondary schools for the need of some such religious inquisition. This is also being vigorously backed up by letters to the press by clergymen, who are retailing a lot of rubbish about the "right of every child to know that there is a religious interpretation of life," which in practice means giving the child a dose of sectarian teaching, while hiding from it the truth about religion. Mr. (Rev.?) Basil A. Yexlee, of the University of Oxford Department of Education, writes that it is time the section of 1870 Act which provides that religion must be taught at the beginning or end of the school lesson should be abolished. This means, of course, that religion is to be permitted to permeate the whole of the school time. Religious tests for teachers are also being vigorously advocated, with the hypocritical pretence that it would mean only that teachers who were not religious should be excused the religious lesson. Every teacher knows that it would mean loss of status and also difficulty in the way of appointment.

Beyond the question of those interested doing whatever can be done to educate the public in the matter of complete and exclusively "Secular Education" in all State-supported schools, two other things should be done. The first is that all parents who do not believe in State-aided sectarian education should at once withdraw their children from religious instruction. That alone would give the Government warning, and the general public a lesson, and as religious belief is officially a part of the "Scout," they should be withdrawn from that until that movement is completely secularized. Next, the teachers should let the Churches know quite definitely that it is irrevocably opposed to religious tests for teachers, and also that it will oppose the alteration of the law which forbids the teachers introducing the religious lesson at any time of the day. Any time would soon mean in practice all the time. It is high time that the N.U.T. nerved itself to something higher in the educational scales than wages and promotion, and that teachers remembered that in addition to being employees they are also individual members of a community who will not forego their rights as citizens to protest, not merely against the teaching of sectarian religion in State schools, but also against their being used as pawns in the clerical game. The teacher should be one of the most honoured persons in the modern State, not a mere catspaw of parsons and ministers of religion.

These are days of specialized knowledge, and specialized knowledge is good, inevitable, but it has its dangers. For example, we were once talking to the lecturer on history in one of our large public schools. In the course of conversation we raised a point that had certain biological implications. "That," he said, "is out of my line. I know nothing of biology." Probably had we raised a question with historical reference the teacher of biology would have replied in the same terms—it was out of his line. But how can an historian understand history without a working knowledge of the influence on conduct of biological, economic and physiological factors? There is no part of the body that acts

independently of other parts. That is a lesson that was laid down centuries ago by Socrates, and in our own day was stressed by Herbert Spencer in a small work—*The Study of Sociology*—which everyone should read, however much one may disagree with some of the conclusions. Specialized knowledge is of tremendous importance, but when the specialist has done, the fact that man is a whole, and must be considered as a whole, gains in its significance.

We note in an *Observer* review of a recent book the author says she went to the Oxford Dictionary and found Man defined as "Human Being." Then she turned to "woman" and found her defined "Adult human female." The authoress rather caustically remarks the definition of women is rather slighting. But if the lady had studied Church history she might have found an account of a discussion in an early Church Council as to whether woman was a human being at all. The point was decided in favour of "human" by a majority vote. But the Church never gave up the idea that woman was not merely a different animal from man, but an inferior one, and very dangerous at that.

The Rural Dean of Kingston and Mr. L. Ebury will debate the question "That the Christian Religion has no Adequate Historical Foundation," in the Market Place, Kingston-on-Thames, to-day (July 9), commencing at 7.30 p.m. Mr. Ebury will affirm that question and the Rural Dean of Kingston will take the opposite view. Debates are always attractive, and providing they are conducted along proper lines, should be interesting and instructive.

We are asked to announce that the Birkenhead (Wirral) Branch are holding a picnic at Thurston on July 16. Merseyside Freethinkers and friends are cordially invited and are asked to make a note of the date. Details are not to hand, but may appear in next issue.

Mr. G. Whitehead will be in Manchester for the week commencing to-day (July 9). Details of meetings will be found in the Lecture Notices Column, but a useful reminder here is that Pioneer Press literature may be obtained at all the meetings, also details of membership in the N.S.S. There has been an increase in the open-air activity of the local N.S.S. Branch, and that should help towards full meetings during Mr. Whitehead's visit.

## Neo-Christianity

HUMAN systems change. New knowledge leads to revision. We have Neo-Malthusians, Neo-Kantians, Neo-Lamarckians, Neo-Darwinians. This is part of a natural process, and the expectation of such a development is in the very essence of scientific thought. All that is human must retrograde if it do not advance, wrote Gibbon. Malthus, Kant, Lamarck and Darwin are not belittled by the process of knowledge growing from more to more. It is so easy to stand upon the shoulders of the great, see a little further than they did, and proclaim that the life's work of the pioneer was useless. Easy, but stupid! To contribute ever so little to the intellectual life is good. Yet to preen oneself upon picking out a few rags from the fabric of a great man's achievements is on a par with rejecting a thesis, carefully phrased and documented, because of the discovery of a misplaced comma.

Can we be equally generous with neo-Christianity and make the same common-sense allowances? This is what we are being beseeched to do yearly, daily, hourly. The Commission on Church Doctrine ask us to do it. They accuse us of flogging a dead horse. Half a century ago the authors of *Essays and Reviews*

took up the same position. Christianity grows, they said. Why not recognize it?

Does it *grow*, indeed? Is Christianity then a human system like all other systems? Is it no different from Socialism, Conservatism, Marxism? Must it change as Early Astronomy, Early Geology, Early Agriculture, have changed. Is it to be revised (and, be it noted, if need be, *rejected*) as Medicine, Demonology, Astrology, Witchcraft, and other early beliefs have had to be revised or rejected? Is Christianity then of Man? Is it not God-given? Is it not a Divine intrusion? Has a Divine Revelation to wait upon the slowly-growing mind of man, to be amended as that evolving mind dictates? Is there nothing Absolute revealed to us; nothing that has not been acquired by the tortuous and bloody method of human trial and error? And, if it should be intended that the Revelation of God to Man be always in the position of being up for alterations and repairs, if Man is the master of Things, and the Oracles have to obey his behest, is not Revelation then immediately indefinite, relative, restrictive; is it not even harmful? If Man delivers judgment upon the Oracles of God, then it may be that the new phase of Christianity, say in 1950, may be to Reform it Altogether and so achieve the same fate as has befallen Witchcraft.

God is working, just the same, says the Modernist. He reveals to us Original Sin, the Virgin Birth, Salvation by Faith. He tells us that there are witches and that they must be put to death. He tells us how to discover the tokens of our wife's virginity and treat her similarly. He tells us to stone to death the man who picks up sticks on a Sunday. But (praise the Lord), he drops an odd word here, an imprecation there, so that, when we are wise enough, he is sure that we will do nothing of the kind. We will, in short, *debunk* God. And it is God (again Thanks be to Him), that has, in his goodness and in his own time, let us into the secret. He has given us a growing brain, and helped it on by, now and again, a prodigious wink or a most prophetic nod.

It is, of course, a roundabout way, but then God always works in a roundabout way. Nobody can see sense in God's methods, whether it is by the way of Revelation, or by the way of Natural Creation. God's way with his minor creations, for instance, is to create millions of lives in order to guarantee the existence of a handful. He designs one creature to live on a fellow creature and the fellow creature to avoid its fate by a masterstroke. The cat to catch the mouse; the mouse to dodge the cat! *Herein we have contradiction contradicted, the very marriage of pro and con.*

God's Church is in a quandary. It wants to pay some kind of compliment to brains, for to be oblivious to the things of the mind is a policy of danger at a time when popular education is beginning to show some result. Besides it is not gratifying to ecclesiastical self-respect to be classed with the intellectually backward; it doesn't help their *amour propre*. They shrink from repeating too often: This is a Mystery which will be revealed to us, hereafter. They nowadays avoid the cliché: When Jesus said so and so, we admit it sounds bad. But *we* know the secret.

God's Church (Roman) knows better. This is *Intellectual Pride*, they explain. Give the people Mystery, Mystery, and still more Mystery. Give them Pious Phrases, which sound well and mean nothing. They like it. Then, as the Music Hall Artist says, they will eat out of your hand. The *Blessed Mystery* is a winner. When Jesus said so and so, you are allowed to listen to it. You are even allowed to read it. But you mustn't gather any meaning from it. The Meaning is with us. We will tell you what Jesus meant. Holy Church is the repository of all the secrets. It is the Repository of all the Blessed Mysteries. Holy

Church will tell you, when the occasion arises, that in a mysterious way religion is rightfully bloodthirsty. It will explain to you, if you are insistent, and the number of your confessions is falling off, how it is that Franco is a Gallant Christian Gentleman. The Pope is the Vicar of Christ on Earth, He knows! Holy Roman Church is Christ's Mouthpiece. What would Jesus do? What did Jesus mean? They will tell you. Here is Revelation indeed. Here is something that will give you all the answers, without humming and hawing, and without any pandering to Intellectual Pride.

This is what the Public Wants, thinks the Roman Catholic Church, and we will give them it. They ask questions at times, but when they get too hard we just say Blessed Mystery, and it generally proves a sufficient and comforting answer. If the members of our flock are too persistent, then we try what fear will do, and serve up post-mortem penalties of terrifying aspect. *Wholesome fear* is one of the approved methods. If this does not work, the Church is reduced to *Intellectual Pride*, or worse, as an explanation of their renegation.

All the Churches to-day are in some such quandary. They have all resolved themselves into Committees considering ways and means. One thinks accommodation is the policy; another thinks that it pays better to stick stubbornly to one's brief. God, we suppose, is helping the advocates of both policies; for they are, presumably, prayerful, these Christians and Neo-Christians, and the prayers of righteous men availeth much.

It is not, however, obvious to the ungodly that their prayers are availing much. On which side God leans will, of course, be decided by the event. We have little respect for the cleric who, with protective aims, throws away the historic creed, admits the sins of organized Christianity, and says Christianity has never yet been tried. *If it were*, says he, then we should see something. We are seeing quite a good deal at present and it is enough. We do like, however, to think that the things of the mind, even to the professional adjuster, are to some little extent coming into their own. For it is upon the things of the mind that any kind of skilled technique for human advancement must ultimately depend.

T. H. ELSTON

## The Christian Confidence Trick

### II.

THERE was an old nursery adage: "Shut your eyes, open your mouth, and see what the Lord will send you." Something akin to this old game, was practised when under the dictatorship of Elizabeth, the English Prayer Book of 1559 was issued, containing the twelve commands of the Mosaic Decalogue. These commands, suitable as they might have been in the eyes of their leader Moses for an Eastern Arab tribe such as the Israelites who were given to the worshipping of other Gods than the orthodox Sun-god—named (according to Macrobius) by the oracle of Kharos IAO, and known to the Israelites as YAH and YAHUH (wrongly rendered in the Bible as JEHOVAH, Ex. vi. 2) who was represented as being a very jealous god—such as the worship of Priapus at the altar of Baal-peor, and the innumerable gods of the Astronomer priests of Eastern countries. But such commands were and are impracticable and incongruous under Elizabethan and our more modern conditions of social life; and were never intended to apply to the Gentile world; for instance: notice the absurdity of the second command which prohibits the making of pictures and statuary, and the modern discovery of photography which Moses knew nothing about. Notwithstanding their incongruity, these commands of an alien race were smuggled into the book by the priestly trick of suppressing the dedicatory words following "I am the Lord thy God"—"who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage"—by which it would have been rendered nugatory by being shown to whom they applied, and have exposed the fact that they had no application to any but the tribe of Israel, i.e., to those "of the seed of Abraham." But can we understand the mentality and apathy of a people who, when the Book was revised in 1928, not entering a protest against the re-inclusion of the code and acquiescing in its detention knowing the hypocrisy of repeating a prayer for help from the deity to keep each command, while having no intention of observing any one of them?

It does not seem to have occurred to the authors of the 1559 Prayer Book that the Decalogue is by implication antagonistic to the practice and teaching of Jesus during his lifetime, who, we read in three of the Gospels—Matt. xix. 28; Mark x. 17; and Luke xviii. 20—enumerated an "Octologue" code of eight commands to a young Jew desirous of obtaining "eternal life"; in which code not one word was mentioned of the duty of sabbath keeping. That such omission was not accidental is made certain by the statement that on the observance of the eight commandments, was fulfilled the *whole of the law*.

As regards the application of the Judaic commandments to Christians; if we are to believe Paul, who had a better chance of plain speaking to the Jews after the gibbeting of Jesus—for blaspheming against the traditions of the Jews under the protectorate of the Roman Government, and thus creating disorder—than Jesus himself had. For the Jews were naturally incensed against him and sought to kill him, in consequence of which he had to hide. It was therefore too dangerous for him to make his statements too definite against sabbath observance.

It must be borne in mind that the majority of converts during the first century were uncircumcised Jews, who clung tenaciously to their old traditions in which they had been brought up, two of which were circumcision and sabbath observance, both obligations being invariably classed together. A small minority consisted of Essenian monks from Mount Carmel and Mount Athos.

If we are to believe Paul, he stated to the Romans (ii. 14), that the Christians "had no law but that of their own heart and conscience." In his Epistle to the Colossians of Phrygia (ii. 14), he tells the Jewish converts, who were continually making trouble that the Gentile converts were not circumcised—that "the Saviour by his death blotted out the written ordinances," i.e., "the law" as laid down in the Pentateuch, "took it away, nailing it to his cross." Also that henceforth no one was to be judged "in respect of new moon festivals or the sabbath days" (16, 17); that they were "no longer under the law"; were "discharged from the law," and were "dead to the law" (Rom. vi. 15; vii. 4-6). To the Ephesians (ii. 11-15) he stated that the disciples were "alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of the promise . . . but now in Jesus, once far off, ye are now made near to the blood of Christ who broke down the dividing wall and abolished the law of commands." To Timothy (iv. 1-3): that "in later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrine of demons through the hypocrisy of men who speak lies . . . forbidding to marry and to abstain from meats." An

innocent premonition of the comparatively modern doctrines of the Roman Church, viz., celibacy, fasting, and papal infallibility! We cannot therefore be surprised that that Church discourages the study of the Bible by the laity.

It may surprise my readers to learn that "the law," i.e., "The Pentateuch" or "Five Books of Moses," to which so much importance was attached, was shut up in a box or "Ark," and carried about, was stolen, and discovered later in the "house of the Lord" by the High Priest Hilkiah. On the advice of Shaphan the scribe (2 Kings xxii. 8) it was taken to a witch called Huldah (14) for verification. The Lord was much upset over the affair, and said he would "bring evil upon the place and upon the inhabitants thereof," for, since the loss they had been burning incense to other gods—planetary (xxiii. 5-6) and phallic (14): Ultimately the scroll of the law was destroyed by fire at the destruction of Jerusalem. But this was not exactly the end of it, for a century and a half afterwards, it was rewritten by Ezra (or Isdras) from memory (2 Esdras xiv.), who in a dream was commanded by the Lord to retire to a field for forty days and aided by five scribes, to re-write the scroll, which he did "while drinking a strong liquor the colour of fire." A wonderful performance! The five books constituting the Pentateuch are attributed by the compilers of the Old Testament to Moses as the author. But as Deuteronomy describes the death and burial of Moses, it requires some credulity to accept such a statement.

Thus we see the basis upon which sabbath observance, which some modern Christians would palm off on to an apathetic public is founded. If these misguided Christians want to judaize themselves by sabbath observance, why not adopt circumcision as well? The early Christians displayed more common sense, and would have nothing to do with such judaic superstition. This fact is corroborated by three Church historians—Eusebius, Mosheim, and Grotius; also by the Early Fathers themselves, who tell us that they did not observe any one day of the week more sacred than another. The following statement in the controversy between the Gentile convert Justinus Martiri (154 C.E.) and the Jew Trypho (Dial. xii.) also lends support to the fact. The former wrote: "Ye suppose, because ye are idle for one day of the week, that ye are pious . . . the heavens are not idle, nor are they sabbath observers. If before Abraham was, there was no need of sabbaths, so now there is no need of them since Jesus came." And when Tertullian, Bishop of Carthage, in writing to the Emperor Severus (193-217 C.E.) expounded the principles of Christianity, he made no mention of the obligation of sabbath observance amongst Christians.

W. W. HARDWICKE

[We regret to have to make the following corrections in Dr. Hardwicke's article of last week—last par. first line, p. 428, for "ward," read "word"—p. 429, line 13 from top of page, for "they were cut down," read "which were cut down," last par. line 1, for "Seraphim" read "Teraphim," and line 10, for "Aris" read "Aries."]

It is silent Sunday; the populace, not yet admitted to their beer-shops till the respectabilities conclude their rubric mummeries—a much more audacious feat than beer.—*Carlyle*.

The other side of this desire for truth is a passionate hostility to those who are engaged in imposing this system of false teaching and swindle of salvation upon the ignorant and the innocent at the national expense.

Gerald Massey.

## The Virgin of Covadonga

ALTHOUGH I was fashioned by a man, I am a woman, a virgin. Or to speak more precisely I am the image of a woman. No ordinary woman either; nothing less than the Madre de Dios, the Mother of God. But although I am a mother they all call me a virgin. How they make that out I don't know, but, as I said, I am no ordinary woman. Perhaps my maker could explain, but he never did; and now he is dead, so we can't ask him. But what does it matter? What they call me can't hurt me, and it pleases them. At any rate, in my old home thousands upon thousands came to visit me each year. I must be well worth looking at, for they light candles before me the better to see me; and they bow down before me and do funny things with their hands. What these signs with their hands mean I cannot tell, but these exercises seem to give these simple folk pleasure, so what of it?

My house, you must know, is among the grim mountains of Asturias in the North of Spain. No ordinary place either. The eldest son of the King of Spain is called the Prince of Asturias, like the son of the English King, when he achieves one, is called the Prince of Wales. His Most Catholic Majesty Alfonso did achieve a Prince of Asturias, though it was not a very successful achievement. But I felt honoured when the young man, on renouncing his royal rank to marry that Cuban charmer, took my name, and became the Count of Covadonga. I have wondered sometimes whether the Cuban senorita, like me, was—but we'll let that go. Certainly she did not, like me, live in a basilica.

Yes, I suppose I am no modest violet; on the contrary, I was proud of my basilica. It was no ordinary basilica, was mine. It was erected ever so many years ago to commemorate King Pelayo's great victory over the Moors. This good king, I have been told, was the first Christian monarch of Spain, unlike the Caudillo, who will be the last. But they resembled each other in one thing; they both had dealings with Moors; Pelayo defending the Spaniards against them, and Caudillo defending the Moors against the Spaniards. Well, time marches on, and as the Caudillo's friend Monsieur Bonnet says, "Autres temps, autres mœurs." I cannot say that I know much about Moors, but from what I have heard during the last three years it would seem that quite a number of Spanish virgins have had to deal with Moors, and they have perhaps, been wondering whether Pelayo or the Caudillo took the more reasonable view of events.

Whatever may be the answer to this conundrum, there is no doubt that these Moors have been very tiresome to the Spaniards. During their latest invasion of the Peninsula, in company with certain people who delight to call themselves Ayrans because their skin is different from the Moors, I was compelled to leave my basilica, and carried away by certain Spaniards to the country of M. Bonnet. The city to which I went has a reputation of being gay, and is not noted for the number of its virgins. But I had anything but a gay time on the banks of the Seine, for, for many a weary month, I lived in the cellar of a house, which was called an Embassy. In certain respects an embassy resembles a basilica; in both men are not troubled about the truth of things, in both men deal in fantasies. I was much grieved to leave my mountain top for a mildewed cavern, but in time all unpleasant things come to an end, and I am now on my way home to Covadonga. I do so hope the Moors also have gone to their home.

When I left the bowels of the Embassy for the bright sunlight of Asturias I made a strange discovery. The Caudillo, who is not only a soldier, but, like

Pelayo, is a "Christian Gentleman," had a bright idea. To compensate me for my long sojourn in a mouldy cellar he has made a decree that I am entitled to full military honours. Just like himself; just like Alfonso; just like Pelayo. Ah, yes, and just like my husband-father-in-law-son in the Land of Eire. When my husband-father-in-law-son, in the shape of a biscuit, is carried through the streets of Dublin, a military guard, with fixed bayonets, acts as an escort, so that he may be duly eaten by men and not by mice. I, too, being a woman don't like mice, so I am glad to have my military guard. Also, I think it only fair that the Mother of God should have the same honour as her son, for without the mother there would be no god. It stands to reason: no hen, no egg.

It is a long, tedious journey back to my basilica, but the military gentlemen are doing their best, and in due time I shall arrive. I have already crossed the frontier bridge into Spain at Irun, and there, and at San Sebastian, full military honours were accorded me. I am to have, they tell me, a slow journey along the northern coast of Spain to my basilica, and I am not surprised, for those Aryan Moors seem to have knocked the old place about a bit. I shall, however, be glad to be home again, and I must say that I feel a little hurt that the good Caudillo did not secure my return earlier. He had a chance, I am informed. They say that my guardians in Paris offered to exchange me for a Republican who had been condemned to death, but that the Caudillo said, "Nix on the Virgin!" Fancy leaving me in my cellar for the sake of a lousy Republican, who, it seems, was killed with full military honours. It makes me wonder whether these honours are so desirable, but then I am not versed in these matters, being only a simple virgin, while the Caudillo is a "Christian Gentleman."

BAYARD SIMMONS

### Animals and the Church

If, in olden times, inanimate objects could be punished by law, it is easy to imagine how much quicker our ancestors were in ascribing responsibility and guilt to living things. From the most remote ages comes evidence that this was the common practice. Animals that offended were treated like human criminals. Before there were regular courts of justice, they were delivered to the injured person or his kin for punishment. Later they were brought into court—domestic animals into secular courts, wild animals into the ecclesiastical courts. There they were formally arraigned, represented by counsel, tried, acquitted or convicted—and, if convicted, they were punished. And these were not unique proceedings. They were common all over Europe and even in America.

One of the most famous of these cases arose in Savigny in 1457, when a sow and six little pigs were brought to trial with all due formality for having killed and partly eaten a child. The evidence was clear, but the counsel for the accused animals put up such a strong fight that the sow was convicted. The little porkers were acquitted on account of their youth and because of the bad example set by their mother. The unhappy sow was hanged on the gallows in the market-place before a large court of spectators and left for days as a warning. The little pigs were again in court within three weeks because their owner refused to give bond for their future good behaviour. They were therefore declared forfeit to the noble Lady of Savigny. The records in this case are much more complete than those of some of the magistrates' court in New York City.

In 1494 another pig was convicted of having committed a murder on land belonging to the church, and the monks were the prosecutors. The sentence pronounced upon this pig is worth quoting for the delectation of modern judges. "We, in detestation and horror of the said crime, and to the end that an example may be made and

justice maintained, have said adjudged, sentenced, pronounced, and appointed that the said porker, now detained as a prisoner and confined in the said abbey, shall be by the master of high works hanged and strangled."

Other domestic animals were also criminals. In 1314 a bull attacked and killed a man near Moisy. The beast was sentenced to be hanged on the common gallows and the judgment was affirmed by the Parliament of Paris. Dijon condemned and executed a horse for homicide in 1389, and a mare was burned to death in Aix as late as 1694, by order of the highest judicial tribunal of the province.

Among the creatures prosecuted in the ecclesiastical courts throughout the centuries were rats, mice, locusts, grasshoppers, weevils, mosquitoes, flies, ants, vermin and, of course, snakes. The proper judgment against insects and wild animals was that they be anathematized, but sometimes they were excommunicated. In 1338, for instance, a swarm of insects devastated a region in the Tyrol. They were condemned in the ecclesiastical court and the parish priest was ordered to excommunicate them. This he did by the solemn ceremony of "inch of candle." But, because of the sins of the people and their remissness in the matter of tithes, the impertinent insects resisted the power of the church. After every green thing had been eaten and the inhabitants had been reduced to the verge of starvation, the anathema finally took effect and the insects left.

One of the most famous cases is that of the rats of Autun, charged during the early part of the sixteenth century with having wilfully eaten and feloniously destroyed the barley crop of the province. The culprits were cited to appear on a certain day but defaulted. The court, however, appointed as their Counsel Bartholomew Chassanee, who, as a result of the reputation he made in this and other similar cases and by a dissertation on the law and procedure in such prosecution, became one of the most distinguished of French jurists.

The honourable and able advocate was as earnest and faithful in defending the rats as he would have been in the defence of his most eminent and wealthy human client. To begin with, he made use of every conceivable pretext and technicality to avoid a trial, contending that since the rats were scattered over a great many villages, one summons was not enough. This point was sustained and a second citation was issued by the court with directions that it be published from the pulpits of all the parishes inhabited by the defendants.

After the not inconsiderable time required to give this notice had elapsed, Chassanee came before the court again and excused the default of his clients on the ground that the journey was long and difficult and particularly dangerous for his clients because of the many cats in the district. He argued cogently that a defendant's failure to obey the court's writ was excusable if he was cited to appear in a place to which he could not come with safety. He demanded, therefore, that those who had filed the complaints against his clients be compelled to give bond for the good behaviour of the cats. And, believe it or not, his motion was granted and a formal order entered. But since the complainants were not willing to guarantee the safety of the rats against the traditional enemies, the cats, that ended the prosecution.

The Jarndyce vs. Jarndyce of animal cases, however, was begun in 1535 by the wine growers of the commune of St. Julien against a species of weevils that had ravaged their vineyards. The case lasted more than forty years. When it was first heard, two prominent advocates appeared for the insects and interposed a vigorous defence. As a result the judge, doubtless also moved by a modicum of common sense, decided that he would not enter a decree against the defendants. Instead he recommended public prayers and masses.

This programme was carried out and the insects disappeared. But some thirty years later they came back, and this time they were actually brought to trial. Their original attorneys had meanwhile died, so two other lawyers were substituted. They presented their plea in June, 1587, and contended that the action was not maintainable, particularly because their clients were not amenable to the only penalty the ecclesiastical court

could impose—namely, excommunication. The case was continued three or four times and argued extensively by both sides, the record reading just like that of a modern American court.

Finally, the case having been carried on well over the summer, the suffering grape growers, disgusted with the law's delays, called a public meeting at which it was proposed that a piece of ground outside the vineyards should be selected and set aside for the exclusive use of the insects, where they might live happily and not interfere with the making of good wine. The proposition was speedily adopted and an offer was made in writing to convey it to the insects, according to law, provided their lawyers were satisfied with the arrangement.

But, as might be expected, that did not end the litigation. The lawyers, probably having some doubt as to their influence over their clients, contended that the land offered was sterile, and rejected the proposal. This contention was contravened by the plaintiffs and lengthy and vehement arguments ensued. But what the final outcome was no man knoweth, for the last page of the record is missing. Perhaps the defendant weevils, dissatisfied with the action of the court, sent a secret delegation to destroy that page, thus effectively nullifying the judgment for all eternity.

A curious case of a different sort occurred at Basle in 1474. A cock laid an egg; and for this heinous offence he was brought before the magistrates, formally arraigned, tried, convicted, and sentenced to be burned at the stake. The execution took place on a height near the city, where, with the attendance of a priest and with as much solemnity as if he had been a human heretic, the hermaphroditic cock was consigned to the flames together with the egg he had laid.

Here, of course, the diabolic element entered in, which is not necessarily true of the other cases described. They have a different explanation. Many animal trials, however, were connected with ideas of demoniacal possession. Pigs suffered most in this respect, since they were thought to be particularly attractive to the Devil. But cats, dogs, goats, and birds, especially if they were black in colour, were not far behind.

(Reprinted) HARRY HIBSCHMAN

## Correspondence

### CHAMBERLAIN'S CONSCRIPTION OF YOUTH TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—In a short letter one cannot argue the whole question; but there is a strong case, logically, that Chamberlain's Conscription of Youth is not being enforced for military purposes at all. It is merely part and parcel of the general aim of Chamberlain & Co. to impose "Fascist" rule upon the British People. To do this in a way suitable to British History and Traditions, the danger of War is used to get the people to submit to military rule.

One significant point is the consideration promised to "Conscientious Objectors"; but a "conscientious objector" is taken to mean merely an extreme pacifist or non-resister.

There are others.

The best of organized youth—not merely one section or party—had declared that they were prepared to serve for Peace and against Fascism, but not under the Government of Chamberlain & Co., who have caused the very danger that threatens us: who are distrusted at Home and Abroad. It is against this justifiable kind of "Conscientious Objector" that Chamberlain's Conscription of Youth was suddenly imposed.

It is not for me to say what Youth should do; but I feel that this particular Conscription of Youth should be fought to the utmost. Chamberlain & Co. have been a disaster to the British People: they look like being a disaster to the World.

I may add that I do not write as an Extreme Pacifist. I have always maintained that, if a Political Democracy decides that Military Defence is necessary; then, all alike should serve in a Democratic Citizen Army. Chamberlain's friendship and assistance to Mussolini, Hitler,

and Franco, prove what he'd like to do to such an Army—if he had the chance. Unrelenting pressure upon this Government is our only hope of escaping disaster—even if War should not break out.

ATHOS ZENO

### LEECH AND MR. SYERS

SIR,—I am sorry if I led Mr. Syers—or anyone else—to think that I meant John Leech had never drawn for the *Illustrated London News*. He made a number of sporting sketches for it—but this is a far cry from the "many thousands" claimed by Mr. Kent, and which was the only point I called attention to. As Mr. Syers admits he does not know about the "many thousands," I am rather at a loss to see why he considers Mr. Kent "correct."

The other question raised by Mr. Syers is purely irrelevant, as I only claimed for Gilbert that he made more drawings for the *Illustrated London News* than any other artist—which is quite true. But as he has raised it, I should like to say that I know the work of Leech, Phiz, and Cruikshank, very well indeed, and that therefore I should be prepared to maintain that Gilbert's output as an illustrator was at least as great, if not greater, than that of the other three artists combined.

H. CUTNER

### EDUCATIONAL REFORMERS

SIR,—Why waste time and space on me? I am a person practically without influence; as shown in my recent book, *An Educational Failure*, I have failed to move the authorities to create a system of education free from theological and other lies, and more effective than the present for civic purposes. So why bother about a defeated sexagenarian?

Why not drop me and get on with your job? Turn your attention to the schools and achieve in them some tiny little success if you can. Rationalists and Freethinkers have never made any impression during all the sixty-six years of my life on the school systems of religious instruction. They are more fully established than ever, and new Roman Catholic Schools, in particular, are being built at public expense. Why do you take it lying down, as Joe Chamberlain used to say? Get something done! The authorities pay no attention to you at all—any more than to me. Don't waste good ink.

F. H. HAYWARD

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

### LONDON

#### OUTDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 6.30, Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place): 7.30, Debate—"That the Christian Religion has no Adequate Historical Foundation." Affir.: Mr. L. Ebury. Neg.: Rev. T. B. Scrutton (Vicar of Kingston).

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): 7.30, Sunday, Mrs. E. Grout. Rushcroft Road, opposite Brixton Town Hall, 8.0, Tuesday, Mrs. E. Grout. Liverpool Grove, Walworth Road, 8.0, Mrs. N. B. Buxton.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 8.0, Wednesday, Mrs. Buxton and Mr. Carpenter. 8.0, Thursday, Mr. Saphin. 8.0, Friday, Mr. Barnes. 3.30, Sunday, Messrs. Bryant, Barnes and Collins. 7.30, Messrs. Bryant, Barnes, Tuson, Wood and Mrs. Buxton.

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# PAMPHLETS FOR THE PEOPLE

## CHAPMAN COHEN

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|--|--|
| <p>No. 1. Did Jesus Christ Exist?<br/>                 2. Morality Without God<br/>                 3. What is the Use of Prayer?<br/>                 4. Christianity and Woman<br/>                 5. Must We Have a Religion?<br/>                 6. The Devil<br/>                 7. What is Freethought?</p> | <p>No. 8. Gods and Their Makers<br/>                 9. The Church's Fight for the Child<br/>                 10. Giving 'em Hell<br/>                 11. Deity and Design<br/>                 12. What is the Use of a Future Life?<br/>                 13. Thou shalt not suffer a Witch to Live<br/>                 14. Freethought and the Child</p> |
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(Continued from page 446)

#### COUNTRY

##### OUTDOOR

BRIDGEMAN (Wittal) BRANCH N.S.S. (Haymarket): 8.0, Saturday, Mr. J. V. Shortt. Well Lane Corner, 8.0, Wednesday, Mr. D. Robinson.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Mound): 7.0, Mr. Frank Smithies—"Carnations and Incarnations."

FENCEHOUSES (Schools): 8.0, Wednesday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Alexander Park Gates): 7.30, Saturday. Stevenson Square, 3.30 and 7.0, Sunday. Beccles Market, 8.0, Monday, Tuesday and Friday. Newton Street, Stretford, 8.0, Wednesday and Thursday. Mr. George Whitehead will be speaking at these meetings.

MIDDLESBROUGH (Davidson Street): 7.30, Wednesday, Mr. H. Dalkin—"Great Reformers of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries."

NEWCASTLE (Bigg Market): 8.0, Friday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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

## The Secular Society, Ltd.

CHAIRMAN: CHAPMAN COHEN

*Company Limited by Guarantee.*

Registered Office: 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Secretary: R. H. ROSETTI.

THIS Society was formed in 1893 to afford legal security to the acquisition and application of funds for Secular purposes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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