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

## Views and Opinions

### A Blushing God

The Bible, naturally, has a deal to say about God. There are numbers of references concerning his goodness, his anger, his wisdom, his power and so forth, and now we have it on magisterial authority that God is actually capable of blushing. The information has been broadcast in the following circumstances. The other day a man and his wife were brought before a London magistrate charged with neglecting their children, seven in number. The children were well fed, but "they were ragged and brought up in indescribably filthy conditions in a condemned house"—that is in a house, unfit for human habitation. The ages of the children were 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8 and 13.

The following conversation took place in court.  
Magistrate (Mr. Mullins): "Did you want to have all these children?"

Mother: "It is my misfortune."  
Magistrate: "How many did you want?"  
Mother: "The Almighty allotted me them."  
Magistrate: "Leave the Almighty out. He would blush for shame to see all this."

The mother and father were sentenced to one month's imprisonment—as a reminder, we presume that with so many hotels available the parents were not really justified in living in a house that had been condemned as unfit for human habitation. The magistrate further remarked that "the defendants are very low grade, but I don't think either of them has done anything positive to harm these children." We believe the sentence gives the proper authorities power to see to the future of the children.

### Suffer Little Children!

To the credit of the magistrate, Mr. Mullins, it must be said that his indignation was aroused, properly aroused, at such a state of things as those indicated by this page of British family history in 1939. He was so disturbed that he adjourned his decision for time to recover his equanimity, as he was "in no condition to be judicial." The pity is that he mixed religion with

his indignation, instead of confining himself to the sociological observations which did him greater credit. From the religious point of view there was no greater reason for thinking that God blushed over the terrible condition of these seven children (seven is a "sacred" number) than one has for thinking that God blushed when the children of England were being murdered in mines and factories for several generations in order to build up the commercial supremacy of this country, and to enrich some of our now very much honoured aristocracy. God was not expected to blush when the Italian airmen machine-gunned and poison-gassed women and children in Abyssinia and Spain. On the contrary our Prime Minister paid homage to the King of Italy after this machine-gunning made him Emperor of Abyssinia, and our King, who became a "sacred" person after his coronation in Westminster Abbey, sent Hitler birthday greetings (presumably on the instructions of the Prime Minister), despite the terrible treatment measured out to thousands of children in Germany. Of course, God, if there be a God, ought to blush at such things, but no one discovered that he did. The justified indignation of Mr. Mullins evidently overcame his judgment, for the time being.

It is worth noting that the *Daily Telegraph*, in reporting this case, left out the statement about God blushing. Why? Mr. Mullins asked for the greatest publicity for the case, why leave out the fact that the case gave God cause to blush? I think that if a God exists, and if he has the power to do what Christians say he has, then he really ought to blush at behaving in so casual or careless a manner. Perhaps he doesn't blush because he has seen so much of it, and it may be, as so many clergymen tell us, part of his plan, and all will be set right—one day.

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### Babies and Blasphemy

There is another religious aspect of Mr. Mullins remarks that is worthy of attention. He said:—

I asked the mother whether she wanted this succession of children and she attributed them to God. Until society realizes the blasphemy of the very widespread attitude to such births as these such conditions cannot be prevented.

Now I object, as one who has been committing blasphemy all his life, to blasphemy being identified with our existing housing conditions. The statute law of blasphemy consists in making it an offence to teach that there are more gods than one, or to deny the Christian religion to be true, or to discredit the divine authority of the Old and New Testaments, but it says nothing about anyone's qualification to become a parent or how parents shall treat children, or what kind of housing conditions ought to exist. And the common law of blasphemy in its application merely makes it an offence adversely to criticize Christianity in a manner that Christians do not like. It must be

noted that one cannot commit the "crime" of blasphemy against any other religion than the one by law established. Other gods manage to get along without a policeman to look after him. But, then, as American visitors say, our policemen are wonderful. Even God is not safe without them.

But I do strongly protest against a magistrate in open court associating the evils of our housing situation, or any form of immoral or anti-social behaviour with blasphemy. I know this is common with certain Members of Parliament when the question of the abolition of the blasphemy laws comes up, but many Members of Parliament are ignorant on this matter, as on many others, and there is no need for a magistrate to follow their example in this respect.

Mr. Mullins in complaining that public assistance authorities paid no attention to the question of birth-control was on more solid ground. But there have been attempts to induce them to do so, with a very small measure of success. And the opposition to this has been entirely religious. Had Mr. Mullins paid greater attention to this fact he would have realized that it is from religious circles that the opposition has always come, and that the birth-control movement has, until recent years, been almost entirely directed by those whom the law and Christian opinion calls "blasphemers." Even to-day there is not a Roman Catholic priest in the country who would sanction any of his flock practising birth-control; more, he would denounce any such attempt as "child-murder." The Roman Church, like Hitler and Mussolini, are out for quantity all the time. Quality is of very minor consideration. And of the some forty thousand other Ministers of religion in this country, how many of them would dare to advocate birth-control? I question if five per cent could be found who would do so. The teaching generally is still that God sends children. People are encouraged to pray to God for children, they return thanks to God for sending children, and an orthodox Christian mother, after a birth, goes to Church, and disguises the original meaning of the visit, by thanking God for her recovery. Mrs. Seymour was religiously right in saying that God had sent her the seven children. Mr. Mullins was religiously very, very wrong in ordering her to leave God out of it. No good Christian could do so, and we fancy that the clergy generally will not thank him for advising poor people to "leave the Almighty out." God has already been deprived of his control of the weather by the very commonplace non-religious forecasts of the B.B.C., with never a D.V. to qualify them; the Minister of Agriculture talks glibly of the value of fertilisers, and says nothing of praying to God for better crops; the Prime Minister, whenever he is not faced by a semi-religious assembly, calls for more armaments, instead of asking for more parsons; and, if God is now to be turned out of the nursery, where is he to find a shelter sufficiently deep to protect him against the high-explosives of Freethought criticism? The nursery is really the last refuge of deity. Mr. Mullins said:—

Society and religious opinion are mainly to blame, in my opinion, for these horrors . . . had these people had three or four children, all might have been well.

and a day or two later the Clerkenwell magistrate, having an even worse case before him, said he endorsed fully Mr. Mullins' remarks.

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#### Who is to Blame?

Society and religion—and until recent years religion exercised very considerable control over society—are responsible, but I do not see how four children instead of seven would have bettered the situation. The

parents would have been of the same quality, and the domestic surroundings of the children would not have been substantially better. The quality of the children might have been better. We can follow Mr. Mullins' advice and, for the moment commit the real blasphemy of leaving God out of it, and we may say that while nature presents the child, nurture is largely responsible for what follows. Good feeding and a good stock will probably present us with a healthy child. But after that nurture steps in and the environment begins to play its part. Born in Mayfair a young man is not likely to spend his time in stealing pocket handkerchiefs; but he may quite readily steal on a more remunerative scale, or he may be found forging cheques or "putting over" a shady deal of some kind. He will not emulate the child of the slums by stealing a flower-pot, but he may steal a few thousand acres of land, and receive a title as an incidental consequence. I happen to live on the borders of one of the most beautiful forests in Britain, which has shrunk from thirty thousand acres to six thousand through the land-grabbing appetites of people who were not brought up in the slums. The Rector of Loughton, who happened to be also Lord of the Manor, was, about 1860, responsible for taking some five thousand acres at one bite. I am quite sure that this gentleman would never have dreamed of raiding his neighbour's garden, and would have been most punctilious where giving change for a shilling was concerned.

Better surroundings might well have made these children better than they are in Dawlish Street, but in Dawlish Street, whether there were four children or seven is not a very material consideration. They would still have been in the slums. Whatever start nature gave the children would have been heavily discounted by nurture. A Mrs. Seymour would still have believed that God sent the children, the parson or the priest would still have encouraged her in that belief, and if she had managed to develop contentment in Dawlish Street, a religion soaked society instead of saying "Damn your contentment, you have no right to be content," would have picked her out for honourable mention. One wishes also that when next a royal visit is paid to some "distressed" neighbourhood, instead of the visitors being directed to selected houses, where things are clean, and the inmates are induced to say how happy they are, they will get into some of these houses of the Dawlish Street type and so see their subjects in all kinds of circumstances. We did once have a King who had developed a very troublesome habit of poking his nose into places that had not been selected for his inspection, but he is now living in a semi-compulsory exile as a consequence of his not obeying instructions. After all it is not solely the number of children born that is of social importance, it is the quality that is to be considered. As Ruskin once said, the important question is not whether a man has four children or six, but whether his children deserve to be hanged or not.

But I am still left wondering why Mr. Mullins should have been so anxious to save God from blushing. I should not be surprised to learn that Mr. Mullins believes in a God. And in that case—particularly if he is a good Christian—he believes the world as it is was intended, and the suffering of a few years here will be compensated by milleniums of happiness hereafter. If God made the world, if, as we are assured by high ecclesiastical authority, there is a "plan" running through the whole tissue of events, then *not* to blush when the slum life of Christian England is revealed would show a callousness to social rights and human suffering in which only the Hitlers and the Goebbels could find delight.

## The Missionary Muddle

Exeter Hall holds us in mortal submission to missionaries, who (Livingstone always excepted) are perfect nuisances, and leave every place worse than they found it.—*Charles Dickens.*

The Christian clergy, who profess to love their enemies, seldom agree among themselves. When they do so their equanimity is wonderful. One subject on which they do agree is raising cash from the congregations, a game they excel in. As China is in the news, this unhappy country serves them as a means of "raising the wind." Accordingly, an appeal for "China Sunday" in the numerous places of worship has been issued, signed by the Archbishop of York, no less than twenty bishops, and some Nonconformist clergymen. The manifesto is a disarming document, for who could resist an appeal on behalf of distressed humanity. Yet, on a closer scrutiny, it is just a further appeal for funds for mission-work, for the manifesto refers to the "inescapable responsibility of all their fellow-Christians." For the Chinese people belong to other and older faiths, and only a mere handful of them are Christians.

This united appeal for funds by leading ecclesiastics raises the far more important question: "Are Christian missions doing the good they are credited with?" China, for example, despite the episcopal appeal for cash, is a corner of the "Lord's Vineyard" which yields practically no crop, but consumes an amount of energy which might far more profitably be expended on something really useful. There are circumstances which take that enormous country out of the category of ordinary mission fields. It is only from a narrow and ignorant point of view that the Chinese can be called barbarians. They have a civilization which was old while as yet our forefathers were painted savages. They have native religions of their own, and rightly or wrongly, they have an antipathy for foreign ideas. It is we, ourselves, who, in their eyes, are the upstart barbarians. Truth to tell, what with the quarrels and animosities of the many divergent Christian sects who seek to make converts, and the divergence that so obviously exists between our precept and our practice, the spectacle offered by European civilization cannot be a very edifying one.

Left to herself China would have none of us, nor of the Christian Bible. We happen, however, to be the stronger Power, so we secure a measure of toleration for missionaries whom all classes of Chinese view with undisguised contempt. Perhaps we could better understand their attitude if the position were reversed. That is to say, if the Chinese were able by battleships and bayonets to extort terms for their missionaries to preach Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism among ourselves. In some places the missionary is a civilizing agency, that is to say, he introduces Western social habits. That character he does not possess in China. He has nothing but the Christian Religion to offer the people in numerous entirely contradictory versions. Not only do they conflict with each other, but they all run counter to the most cherished and ingrained ideas of Chinese society. To the Chinaman the highest of all virtues is filial piety, and in his eyes some of the most familiar texts of the Christian Bible must appear as utterly shocking and immoral. We ought really to look at these things from a Chinese point of view. It is not pleasant to think what fate might befall Chinese missionaries with their unfamiliar rites and teaching if they were imposed by batons and bayonets upon the sturdy but ignorant population of our Black Country, or upon the

impulsive and still more ignorant Roman Catholics of Ireland.

What it costs to convert a Chinaman in blood and treasure we do not know, but it is very certain that Christian missionary societies expend upon a hopelessly barren soil like China an amount of energy and money which might be used to far better purpose in remedying social inequalities at home among men and women, who, destitute of the high morality of Confucius, stand in as much need of reclamation as the Oriental race we hypocritically pretend to pity.

Some time ago, it was gravely calculated that the mission-harvest, on the most favourable computation, amounted to the very modest figures of two Chinese converts per missionary per year, and that, even so, the quality and reputation of the converts were open to very distressing suspicion. The renegade heathen Chinaman has a confirmed habit of turning his spiritual studies to material account, and is even said to frequent mission stations, and even to succeed in being converted in turn by all the missionaries, Church of England, Roman Catholic, Wesleyan, Presbyterian, and other varieties, in return for being provided with money and rice, especially cash. The unhappy sequel to this questionable rule of conduct is that one wily scoundrel figures as half a dozen converts to the Christian Religion, and a bad Chinaman is transformed into a worse Christian.

Unquestionably, the matter of missionaries will have to be duly considered, and as Jews are looked upon in Christians quarters with hardly less benevolent regard than is the Chinaman, we must be interested in seeing what public opinion determines. The missionary question with Jewish people, that is to say, missions to them, has never been other than a comedy. It has been sometimes farcical, and, at others, a harlequinade. Although enormous sums of money are spent yearly, it is not a danger to Judaism, and is never likely to be. There may be Jews who have become Christians from wholly conscientious motives, but few people have met such paragons. Some of these converts become missionaries in turn. It is an easy method of earning money, if not an honest one.

When the body of the unfortunate Jew was taken and burnt alive at the stake in order to save his soul, those who perpetrated this judicial murder were, at least, straightforward in their bloodthirsty objects. They acted as other savages had acted to them, and as, we fear, many religious folk would act to-day to those who differ from them, though the former be not Chinamen and the latter remain Europeans. In the light of history it is strange that any self-respecting Jew should change his own religion for Christianity. Jewish theology is simple in comparison with Christian theology. One deity is more credible, or less incredible, than a divine syndicate with a terrible devil and a virgin mother of god on the board of directors. Christians have persecuted Jews for nearly twenty centuries. They have shed their blood like rivers; and heaped upon them every possible insult, from the ravishment of their wives and daughters to the fastening on them of ignominious clothing, and penning them in Ghettos. Every Jew has a perfect right to loathe and to hate the religion of Christ. To their honour the Jewish people do not dissemble their love. There is a very wealthy society in England for the conversion of the Jewish people to Christianity. It has an income of about fifty thousand pounds a year, and the number of converts appears to be so small that every one of them, on the average, costs the society a fair slice of the yearly income. How could it be otherwise? If a Jew has a heart, if a Jew has a memory, how can he forget the martyrdom which, for near a score of centuries, has been borne by his unhappy and tortured people. How can he close his

ears to the piteous voice, heard so long ago, as it moans out, then as now, "O Absalom, my son!"

The whole question of missionary enterprise requires serious reconsideration. The matter cannot be evaded much longer by men who may profess to be, and call themselves, Christians, who may even be ordained to the Christian priesthood, but who most certainly have never been converted to civilization.

MIMNERMUS

## The Three Christian Crusades

IN 1095, the Pope Urban II., who was deeply concerned by the distractions of the Christian States, while anxiously solicitous for the strengthening of the Church, proceeded to commission the first Crusade. His emotional oratorical appeals made manifest the shameful Moslem desecration of Eastern churches; the impending danger of the Byzantine Empire and, most terrible of all, the infidel pollution of the sacred sepulchre at Jerusalem. He passionately exhorted his French auditors to restore the renown of the earlier Franks and advised the princes to compose their differences and unite on a military pilgrimage from the comparatively sterile countries of Europe to the fruitful lands of Palestine, a region flowing in abundance with milk and honey. Moreover, as a reward for their Crusade, the Holy Father promised them not only complete forgiveness of their sins on earth, but a certainty of eternal happiness in heaven. This highly-coloured appeal proved successful and the First Crusade commenced.

Secular considerations also conspired in this and the succeeding campaigns. Conquered provinces for the leaders, ampler opportunities for commercial profits and other mundane advantages, inspired the zeal of the adventurers. Again, home affairs were very unprosperous. As Dr. Ernest Barker intimates in his brilliant essay on the Crusades: "Famine and pestilence in Europe caused men to emigrate hopefully to the golden East. In 1094 there was pestilence from Flanders to Bohemia; in 1095 there was famine in Lorraine. . . . No wonder that a stream of emigration set towards the East, such as in modern times would flow towards a newly-discovered gold-field—a stream carrying in its turbid waters much refuse, tramps and bankrupts, camp-followers and hucksters, fugitive monks and escaped villeins, and marked by the same motley grouping, the same fever of life, the same alternations of affluence and beggary, which marks the rush for a gold-field to-day."

As a rule the original Moslem conquerors of the Holy Land were on fairly good terms with their Christian neighbours, but when the Seljuk Turks captured Jerusalem in 1071 the Christian protectorate in the sacred city came to an end. The Crusade to recover lost territory in Asia Minor was also encouraged by the fact that the Moslems were being driven from their Western possessions both on land and sea. Pisa and Genoa had risen in importance and were determined to extend their sea-borne commerce from the Western to the Eastern coasts. Nearly all the military commanders were bent on temporal gains. Religious fervour alone was largely confined to the credulous rank and file, and the zeal and fanaticism of the illiterate adherents of Peter the Hermit led to a blood-stained persecution and pillage of the European Jews who were execrated by the preachers as the arch-enemies of Christ.

The several sections of the Crusading army arranged to assemble at Constantinople the capital of the Christian Greek Empire, and from thence advance to Asia Minor as a preliminary to the capture of Jerusa-

lem. This assembly in his capital the Emperor Alexius was anxious to avoid, as his faith in the probity of his Catholic visitors was strictly limited. But as they insisted on coming, Alexius bound them by an oath of fealty which, as later events proved, sat very lightly on most of them.

Nicea was taken and Antioch soon fell. Jerusalem, the golden city, was captured in 1099. Then, states Dr. Z. N. Brooke, in his *History of Europe* (Methuen, 1938), "all the pent-up religious emotion burst forth. Men wept tears of joy at beholding the Holy Places, and in the excitement of religious zeal proceeded like the Chosen People in the Old Testament to exterminate the misbelievers. Only Raymond held aloof from this work of massacre." But Raymond was also distinguished from his leading associates by a code of honour they completely lacked.

The First Crusade led to the foundation of four Latin States in Syria and Palestine, and the victors were greatly elated. Indeed, at the dawn of the twelfth century, the cross seemed triumphant in West and East alike, and Godfrey of Bouillon reigned supreme in Jerusalem.

Had the agreement between the Christian Latins and Greeks been observed, Syria with its seaport, Antioch, would have been restored to the Eastern Empire. This omission was bitterly resented at Constantinople. Meanwhile, the Seljuks harassed Syria and the Fatimite Moslems strove to recover Palestine. But all the antagonists were weakened by conflicting interests. Feudalism and the Roman Church had been introduced into the territories wrested from Islam, and a powerful and imperious hierarchy of patriarchs, archbishops and bishops in Jerusalem virtually rivalled the secular ruler. Fierce competitors as they were for the Levantine trade, yet the goodwill of both Pisa and Genoa were essential to the Latin States. Venice, which had stood aloof from the first Crusade now entered the fray and the Venetian navy not only defeated the Fatimite fleet, but participated in the taking of Tyre in 1124.

What we have we hold, was the motto of every contending party, coupled with a determination to augment its possessions. Moslem disunity coincided with serious dissensions among the various Christian communities when Zangi, emir of Mosul on the Tigris—the ancient Nineveh—decided to consolidate all Islamic Syria under undivided sway. Aleppo and Hamah were captured and the emir soon menaced Antioch itself. He then invested Damascus, but its Mussulman ruler made a successful resistance. Undaunted, Zangi then proceeded to assail Latin Edessa which he captured in 1144. This able commander was assassinated two years later, but his son Nuraddin completed his predecessor's plan.

The fall of Edessa was keenly resented in Europe, and the Pope despatched St. Bernard on a crusading mission which elicited a ready response. But passion for priority prevailed, and the French and German campaigners were so much at variance that they nearly came to blows, and when the English and Italian contingents joined the French they acted under independent command. The Germans, under Conrad, arrived first and soon met with disaster. When the French appeared they received a very chilly reception from the Christian residents who had suffered severely from the rapacity of the Teutonic crusaders. Then, starvation and disease, intensified by the constant Turkish pressure, sadly diminished the French and allied forces. In fine, as Dr. Brooke writes: "The second Crusade was a grievous failure . . . the general situation after it was worse than before. Western Europe was ashamed and disgusted; even St. Bernard's reputation was temporarily affected; and it needed the lapse of forty years and the violent shock of the fall of Jeru-

salem to galvanize the crusading spirit into life again." Moreover, this complete fiasco served to embitter relations between Latin and Greek Christendom, for the aid of Byzantium might have averted the disaster.

Nearly half a century elapsed before the Third Crusade was launched. Meanwhile, the Eastern Latin States stood in grave peril from Moslem attack. The Pope was powerless to intervene for the Vatican was engaged in an interminable conflict with the German Emperor, Frederick of the Red Beard (Barbarossa). The menaced Latin communities therefore turned to Manuel, the Greek ruler for assistance. Manuel, however, was more concerned with his lost European dominions than the plight of the Eastern Christians. As a matter of fact, all the belligerents were playing for their own hand while conditions in Jerusalem became worse and worse.

Saladin, a military genius, had arisen in Egypt and soon attained supreme power. His foes he decisively defeated at Damietta in 1169. When Nuraddin, the Syrian ruler, died in 1174, his son was a mere minor, so Saladin, who was already master of Egypt, superseded the boy-ruler as Sultan of Damascus. He was now able to threaten the Kingdom of Jerusalem, both from the East and South.

Jerusalem's doom was now sealed, although its downfall was delayed by a truce between its ruler and Saladin. This truce was violated by the Christians, so Saladin declared war in which he overthrew the Military Orders of Nazareth. Near danger now constrained the Christians to compose their quarrels and present a united front to the enemy. But at Hittin their forces were shattered by their Moslem foes and the King of Jerusalem and many of his leading officers were taken prisoner. This devastating defeat proved irreparable and Jerusalem succumbed to the first assault in 1187. At the close of the year, Tyre was almost all that remained of Latin Jerusalem under Christian control.

So deeply wounded were the feelings of the West that Pope and Emperor and the many minor princes laid aside their personal animosities and combined in a common effort to recover the desecrated City from the insolent infidels and restore Christian prestige in the East. Even the Scandinavian fleet participated in the expedition.

The most imposing and best equipped army that had ever undertaken a crusade proceeded under the Barbarossa's command. Yet, the Greek Emperor, Isaac Angelus, viewed these crusaders with aversion and placed every impediment in their path. He even entered into an alliance with Saladin against Barbarossa's Moslem ally, the Sultan of Iconium. Nevertheless, the Western coerced the Eastern Emperor into compliance, but when Frederick passed over from Gallipoli into Asia his army was so harassed by the treachery of the Iconium Turks that he was compelled to capture their city to ensure the safety of his advance. Now all seemed serene until Barbarossa was accidentally drowned in the river Salif. His son resumed hostilities, but the German forces were so decimated by desertion and disease that only a remnant of the splendid original army at last arrived at Acre.

The Kings of France and England subsequently appeared on the scene, and with the arrival of Richard I. the crusading contingents were completed. For two years Acre had withstood a siege, and its fall was postponed by the disunity and pique of the Christian commanders. Saladin strove to relieve the beleaguered city, but although he re-provisioned it, his efforts were unsuccessful. In 1197 Acre was starved into surrender and the initial success of the Third Crusade achieved.

The French, English and Austrian leaders were

soon at daggers drawn, but Cœur de Lion certainly proved an able soldier. He captured Jaffa and Caesarea, worsted Saladin at Arsuf, and came within sight of Jerusalem. But there success terminated. Richard concluded a truce under which Christians were granted access to the Holy places and guaranteed their coastline from Ascalon to Acre.

Little cultural or economic advantage resulted from a century of crusading efforts. Most of the civilizing influences reaching Christian Europe came from Moslem Spain, while Pisa, Genoa and Venice only became more opulent because of them. This seems a poor return for the sacrifice of blood and treasure they involved. Then, as Dr. Barker reminds us, the Crusades ended "not by the occupation of the East by the West, but in the conquest of the Christian West by the Mohammedan East. The Crusades began with the Seljuk Turk planted in Nicea, they ended with the Ottoman Turk entrenched on the Danube. Nothing is more striking in history than the recession of Christianity in the East after the thirteenth century. Everywhere in the fifteenth century, in Europe and in Asia, the crescent was victorious over the cross, and crusade and mission, whether one regards them as complementary or inimical, perished together."

T. F. PALMER

## Mea Culpare

*A short article by the author of everything, Recorded by a dreamer who had partaken of a heavy supper.*

For all the sin wherewith the face of man is blackened—man's forgiveness give and take.—O. Khayyam.

A GENTLEMAN in a long white beard appeared unto me and said:—

"Omar was not the first man to treat me with scant respect. In the times when 'Heresy' like 'sedition' was the name given to clear thinking, I could be protected. Lately I have been left exposed to my worst enemies—Reason and Science—to an alarming extent.

"Many words have been put into my mouth and indeed I have put many words into the mouths of men, a practice that started with Moses up a mountain and continues in odd places to-day. For this reason one revelation more or less will not come amiss, and this one, being in the nature of a confession, may be good for my soul. This is important, because I am all soul, having no body or parts, which is very trying.

"It is apparent that I have suffered from the very beginning from having been mass produced. The fact that such large numbers of me have appeared in so many places has made it too obvious that instead of man being created in my image, I have been created in his. This has done my credit in the minds of thinking men much harm.

"It is one of the many mysteries, that, in spite of a certain uniformity of conception, I should be made to undergo so many changes and be called upon to continually shift my kingdom. I have dwelt in the forests, in the waters, up the mountains, in the sky and now I am everywhere.

"It was, of course, to be expected that I should have had many names, but the changes effected in my character in the last few centuries, have caused me great inconvenience.

"As Jahweh, Abba, Dios, Allah, Buddha, God, Lord, Jesus and Father Divine, I have had many worshippers, and, make no mistake, these are but a few of my aliases.

"In my various guises I have been simple, cunning, cruel, kind, clever, childish, insane, jealous, fearful, loving, great, powerful, powerless, old, young, infinite,

eternal, dead and resurrected. In no instance have I ever had a real father, which may account in some measure for my unfortunate upbringing. Being born of virgins as Osiris, Buddha and Jesus, savours, one admits, of a recurring oddity in the choice of a mother. It has faced me too, with the necessity of becoming my own father and ghost at the same time. All very irregular, albeit the ladies concerned accepted the unusual situation with remarkable indifference.

"Of late I have fallen on bad times. I am becoming too much of a gentleman to succeed in business, and while it is true that 'God is God,' still 'business is business.' One feels that if only I could be re-established in the old firm of thunderbolt manufacturers, or the breather of death upon the Assyrian hordes, or even the slaughterer of the Hittites, with 'arrows drunk with blood,' I could hold my position in the armaments racket.

"The trouble is that my children—did I have children?—no longer hear my voice. Since inbreeding, except in Central Africa, and where primitive peoples live in isolated groups—no longer takes place, there are not many to hear strange voices or see mystic visions. It is all so sad, and yet I find myself still materially alive in the person of Father Divine, who to my many known characteristics had added a few new ones. It is well. One must move with the times. A Rolls-Royce is as impressive as a marble throne, and more easy to abide.

"Lately the earthly dictators have been having some say, and so I think that I should take this opportunity to state that in the next holocaust I shall fight, as usual, on both sides with the same glorious results.

"Prayers for rain, the sick, and Royalty, for blessings on guns, battleships, etc., will be duly heard. For other notices see parish magazines.

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"My faithful and able assistant the Devil—without whom indeed, I could not carry on—has just drawn my attention to the fact that some of my male angels have become once again aware that the daughters of men are fair. Now, I had this trouble before, in the Old Testament, and it is essential, in view of the modern methods of blood-tests to establish paternity, that this matter should be checked. Either these angels must be instructed in the rudiments of contraception, or the gates of Heaven will be kept locked. Give an angel a pair of wings and he'll fly straight to the nether regions, so help myself he will!

"Just one last word. There has been some suggestion recently, by some of those popular scientists whose names appear in Honours Lists, that I must be a mathematical mind, whose thoughts are the universe. That will do fine! It doesn't mean anything, but then I never did mean anything, or do anything, or be anything, except what human foolishness and credulity made me. If men would have me respect myself a little they should invest me with a little more humanity, and all would be well. Mathematical concepts, forsooth!

"I fear that I am on my last legs. As the Creator, I did, it's true, create the universe, but man who created me has also bungled his job. He too, allowed cruelty, injustice, and waste to disfigure his creation, so that my days are numbered. As with all things, the seeds of my own dissolution were born in me. Conceived in the darkness of primitive superstition I must die in the light of reasonable intelligence. With me will die war, poverty and all human degradation, for these, like superstition, are the fruits of ignorance."

He vanished, and having taken some bismuth I felt much better.

GEO EASTMAN

## Acid Drops

With the reports concerning Germany's attempts to build up a commercial treaty with Russia, the obvious desire of our own Government to come to some arrangement with Hitler (a euphemism for giving whatever support is possible to some form of Fascism that will hold off a genuinely democratic form of Government) and the equally obvious reluctance to enter into an alliance with Russia, there is a significance in the appearance of a special in the Italian paper *Gazetta del Popolo*, arguing that the natural allies in Europe are not the democracies but Germany and Russia. It is argued that in Italy, Germany and Russia, the revolutions are proletarian, and they have put into operation both syndicalism and Socialism. We are not concerned with the validity of the argument, but bearing in mind that the Italian Press is as completely controlled as the German Press, the approach is significant. The distrust of British Government straightforwardness following the Spanish War, and strengthened by Munich and the surrender of Czechoslovakia, has enabled the two Fascist States to contemplate moves they would never have ventured on otherwise. Some twelve months ago we suggested the possibility of an alliance between Russia and Germany. We hope events will not convert that possibility into a probability, and the probability into a fact.

It has been said lately in some quarters that the big financial interests would always prevent such an alliance. We are not so sure. The kings of the financial world are better endowed with cunning than with first-rate intelligence, and it is intelligence alone that can take a long range view.

"Germany," says the *Observer*, "does not want war. . . . But there is no abandonment of either the aims or of methods, and both are incompatible with peace. Nor can she deceive us again." We agree, but it is not against being deceived by Hitler that we need not be on our guard. German policy does not run to duplicity, and of late years less than ever. Its present tactics ought not to deceive a child. What we have to be on guard against is being deceived from within. It is the activities of the British "fifth column" that has already given so much to Hitler, that we must watch.

Is there anyone, for instance, who believes that Mr. Hudson, Secretary to a Government Department, would dare, in the course of an official conversation, to suggest the engineering of a huge loan to Germany, without the knowledge of the Prime Minister? Official denials in such matters are not worth the wind spent in their making. We are not surprised that so many in the country fear another Munich during the Parliamentary recess. The general public appear to have forgotten that the Munich settlement began with a kite-flying article in the *Times*, a repudiation of the suggestion from the Government, and its adoption at the secret conclave in Munich at the end of September. In existing circumstances, where world war is at issue, there should be no Parliamentary recess.

We all welcome Christians when they are ready to join with non-Christians in order to promote some necessary social reform, but we do wish they would drop the habit of making interested references to the value of Christianity. For example. At a recent Conference of the Cremation Society at Southsea, the Rev. W. I. Bulman, of Cricklewood, spoke in praise of a reform that incurred the bitterest opposition from Christians, and to which many Christians are still opposed, on religious grounds. He said:—

A cremation service is our last chance to get in touch with people who have forsaken the Church. If we make it beautiful and sincere we can win them back.

Not even when standing in the face of death (of others) is the Christian able to forget that he is a professional evangelist, and display a genuine interest in social

reforms only when he can gain sectarian profit from doing so. Why not, as a good Christian, adopt a slogan such as "Is cremation on earth merely a prelude to an eternal cremation hereafter?"?

Professor E. Allison Peers attempts, in a recent work, to justify accumulation of wealth for the Glory of God:—

Writers of travel-books are always impressed by the splendour of Catholic worship in Spain and by the costliness of the vestments, plate, pictures, statues and other adjuncts of worship. But these, of course, are inalienable heirlooms and even anti-clerical propagandists have never suggested that any of them are sold (or conceivably could be sold) to satisfy the pangs of hunger. They are in a true sense the Church's treasure, for they symbolize the spirit of worship and devotion which is its greatest gift to God.

Professor Peers manages to find room for admiration of this attitude of the well-to-do impoverishing the bodies of men, in order to make magnificent Gifts to God. We confine our admiration to the men, women and children of Spain who gave their lives in the hope of a free, educated and satisfied people taking their places. Rendering Gifts to God either in gold or in service is in comparison intellectually and ethically contemptible, and History will make this judgment. How Holy Church has served God can be exemplified by the following extract from the Catholic *Pensamiento de Navarra* for July 22, 1938 (quoted by *The Voice of Spain*):—

The most effective aid was given to the Tercio of Abarzuza by the Carlists priests who, thanks be to God, were 99 per cent of the clergy in this part of the country. Each priest grouped round him in his village a number of *Requetés*, with sergeants and liaison men, and even stretcher-bearers. They passed on to them the orders and signals which were strictly carried out. It is thanks to all this that on July 19 (1936) the public were able to witness the marvellous sight of *priests placing themselves at the head of the movement* and conferring on it the character of a crusade, exhorting and leading to battle the Red Berets who had already been prepared and trained, and whose close contacts with priests had a result that few expected.

With that delightful clarity that is truly Christian, the *Church Times* remarks that "Christian societies represent the true Church." All we have to do now is to settle which are Christian societies and which is the true Church. Or one might turn it the other way about and say that "the true church is found in Christian societies." These religious profundities may usually be read upside down with just as much enlightenment as in the form of their original presentation.

Mr. A. Duff Cooper, M.P., has found another objection against Socialism. Writing in the *Evening Standard* for July 16, he says that an objection to the "ideal Socialist State is that Socialism abhors charity as nature abhors a vacuum. There is no place for charity." Mr. Duff Cooper evidently regards himself as belonging to a class that nature has ordained to rule, and to play the part of guardians of the poor on his own terms. Hence the objection to Socialism that it has no place in its ideal State for charity. His ideal State is one in which there exists men with large fortunes, and who demonstrate the need for their existence by the fact that they are then able to dole out a little to those who are in want. Thankfulness is thus created in those who need, and a sense of having done good with their wealth solaces the rich for the responsibility of carrying a large income. It is in this way that men such as the Duke of Devonshire, who has just become a successful tax-dodger by becoming a limited company, console themselves for their wealth. Had they not the wealth they possess they could not manifest "charity" to the poor. The poor thus exist for the rich in two senses. One that the rich may have wealth, next that the poor by being thankful for a dole will enable the rich to feel how good they are, and what splendid use they make of their money.

And we have no doubt that Mr. Duff-Cooper, being a good Christian, thanks God for having created the poor as a means of grace for the "superior" class.

Mr. Middleton Murry writes in a recent number of the *Student Movement* that he receives much "support from the Christian faith against the fearful dulling of the human sensibility that is involved in prodigious technical development of this age." We sympathize with his dislike of the mastery of the machine over men, but there is something more than that around us if we would only see it. There is still art, and literature, and scientific study and many aspects of life left us without flying for refuge to an outworn religion. It strikes us that Mr. Middleton Murry is mainly concerned with finding a good excuse for his own reversion to a religion that cannot be justified except in terms of taking a jaundiced view of life as a whole. Besides, the Christian religion was there long before the development of the machine-age, and as a matter of historic fact did nothing to render man impervious to the onslaught of the machine.

The Rev. Arthur Halfpenny, of the Congregational Church, Grafton Square, Clapham, is in dolorous mood. He complains that in his area the people have

so completely lost touch with religion that I am rarely called in to give a Christian burial.

The vast majority of churches reported a considerable increase in congregation during, and after, the crisis last September. But in Clapham people had so far forgotten God that it did not occur to them to come to Church to pray, or even to give thanks for deliverance.

Our heartiest sympathy is with Mr. Halfpenny. If people won't come to the Church even to be buried, things are very black indeed.

Canon Lyon of Loughboro finds "sad reading" in the fact that having asked for £75,000 pounds for new Churches he has received only £13,268. But the Churches cannot fill the buildings they have, so why erect new ones? Perhaps the clergy hope to persuade people that if they keep building more and more Churches it may persuade some that they are supplying a want.

The Editors of *Hymns Ancient and Modern* have decided to delete the snobbish verse which states:—

The rich man in his castle,  
The poor man at his gate,  
God made them high or lowly,  
And ordered their estate.

According to a Sunday newspaper:—

A memorandum circulated by the Church of England authorities states: "The verse has been the subject of much would-be facetious comment and quotation by some class-conscious orators.

It must be admitted that modern editors are probably wise in deleting a verse open to misconstruction.

Short of repudiating an omnipotent God, there is little sense in pretending that God is not responsible for the difference between disgusting affluence and appalling poverty. Besides there is exactly the same horrific attribution to God of causing social inequalities in the Catechism, with its plain insistence that part of "my duty towards my neighbour" is "to do my duty in that state of life unto which it shall PLEASE God to call me."

From the *New Statesman's* "This England":—

Dr. Edmund Distin Maddick, who eight years ago erected a 40ft. white stone mausoleum surmounted by a marble statue of Christ and a little child in Norwood Cemetery, was buried there at noon to-day. Dr. Maddick, who had a distinguished career, was a man of deep religious feeling. Tattooed in colours on his chest was a representation of the Crucifixion.

A special committee has been appointed to consider the present position of religious education in secondary and primary schools at the request of the National Society,

the Central Board of Finance, and the Diocesan Boards of Finance. These bodies have appointed a number of Bishops and Canons as well as a Viscountess and a Lieutenant-Colonel to serve on the committee so we can easily prophesy the result of the findings. It will be that the Government will be asked to give far, far more religious education in all State schools than has hitherto been the case; and to put this religious education into the hands of parsons.

And we should not be at all surprised to find the Government giving the clergy all they ask for, with the Labour Party thinking too much of votes to offer much opposition.

According to Principal Henry Townsend, D.D., as reported in the *Christian World* :—

We all agree that evangelism is urgent, that the new areas challenge us, that the secularism of the age is hardening the human heart.

The we in the above quotation, of course, merely means that the Christians for whom he speaks agree with him. There is not the remotest attempt to produce evidence of any connexion between Secularism and hard-heartedness, it is merely bigoted lying for the alleged glory of an alleged God. Dr. Townsend's libel must be read in connexion with another phrase he uses in the same article, in which he states that all his church-members (old and young) "are baffled by the impotence of the Church on world politics." We imagine that this is another way of hinting at the soft-headedness of his impotent friends.

Our next paragraph we cull from *The Indian Thinker*. It does not lack acidity :—

Writing in the *Church of England Newspaper*, Dr. A. C. Hedlam, Bishop of Gloucester, complains against Germany having deprived two German pastors of their emoluments because they had offered up prayers for peace during the time of the Munich crisis. We think it is not an unqualified evil. When peace is the resultant of certain definite relationships of mutual necessity and understanding between two peoples, which it is within their power to bring about, what is the meaning of people in the name of religion, trying to divert attention by reminding an omniscient and all-good God to do his duty to help the world. It is a most superfluous and officious thing to do.

At the National Conference on Maternity and Child Welfare a Belfast woman told the following story—too good for comment :—

A clergyman and a labourer were fellow-passengers in a railway carriage. The latter was smoking a well-seasoned pipe.

Clergyman: "I have been forty years a clergyman, and during all that time I have known of more cases of cancer of the lips and of the mouth caused by smoking a pipe than by any other cause."

Labourer: "I have been for forty years a labourer, and in that time I have seen more split lips, black eyes and bloody noses caused through fellows like you not minding their own business than any other reason."

Apocryphal the vicar of Teddington, the Rev. H. Williams, who called from his pulpit upon "all Christian people to boycott" the local hospital carnival if the tableau of Adam and Eve appeared, we would remind him of the fact that Christians and children of the most tender age are encouraged to gaze long and earnestly at the distorted, emaciated figure of a man, *perfectly naked* except for a suggestive loin-cloth, pinned to a cross. The only difference between the two exhibits is that, except for the compulsory bathing dresses or figs worn by Adam and Eve, they are clean, healthy human figures, while the Christ figures are usually the vulgar creations of primitive minds obsessed by the sadism of sacrifice.

Chelmsford's Bishop, Dr. Wilson, is a bit of a Yorick (that fellow "of infinite jest"). Writing of the singing of hymns and psalms, he says :—

When the last line or two appears in sight the music gets slower and slower. This peculiarity is inexplicable to me. It always suggests an old-fashioned hansom cab drawing up at its destination, or a gramophone running down.

Many organists "take the organ off" even in the middle of a line when such words as "death," "peace," "grave" are being sung.

The result is most disconcerting to a congregation. They have been lured on to sing heartily, and when they are well under way, suddenly the organ becomes practically inaudible, and they are left hanging in the air with the uncomfortable feeling of having made fools of themselves.

But why should the last three words apply only to the end of the performance?

The Poor Clergy Relief Corporation has distributed in grants during the past year £15,113, with expenses totalling £5,420, roughly twenty-five per cent of the whole. Dissatisfaction has been expressed among the godly at this, and one is not surprised. When it comes to a share-out the clergy are very, very much like ordinary folk.

One of the cruelest comments on the House of Lords was made the other day by one of our leading newspapers. It suggested that the retiring Bishop of London might be created a Lord, and, as a justification, said that his wisdom would be a very welcome addition to the House of Lords. Nothing more scathing has been said of the House of Lords in our time.

Other "crisis" news seems to have ousted from our newspapers the fact that a Minister of Popular Culture has recently been established in Italy, raising a slight hope, perhaps, in the breasts of other peoples that some of the artistic and literary glories of Italy, and the tremendous part it has played in the rise of civilization, would be given a more prominent place than has been the case since the rise of Mussolini. Unfortunately, the precise aims of this Ministry of Culture seem to be merely "to purge Italian bookshops of all volumes published since the war which contain sentences hostile to, or incompatible with, Fascist tenets." This is imitating the famous Roman Catholic *Index* with a vengeance. All dictator countries are occupied in the same gentle sport. In Italy even a second rate, "respectable" work such as Dr. Fisher's *History of Europe* is banned. If Germany and Italy continue on the same path they are now treading, in a couple of generations they will be communities of nit-wits.

We welcome the appearance of a true blue Protestant parson. The Rev. I. Meredith, of Bognor, openly instructs mothers as follows :—

Don't imagine that it is wrong to force a child to come to church.

That is good old-fashioned Christian teaching. Force your children to come to Church. Why not? Does not the Bible warn us "Spare the rod and spoil the child"!

## Fifty Years Ago

CARLYLE was a Calvinist who had lost his creed. To others such loss has been the dropping of a fetter, to Carlyle it was a breaking of the link that connected him with all he really loved. The real feeling is told in his poem "The Night Moth." He bowed to Goethe as a master, but could never quite forgive him for shattering his little shrine in the cottage at Ecclefechan. Goethe could easily become the happy man of the world, dress in velvet, and amuse himself with lords and ladies, and the Weimar theatre; but when Carlyle's supernatural visions faded they left him a peasant, surrounded by poor and ignorant people, and without either capacity or taste for the career of a man of the world.

*The Freethinker*, July 28, 1889

**To get a New Subscriber is to make a New Friend**



# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

H. J. TAYLOR AND J. LILLICRAP.—Thanks for addresses of likely new readers; paper being sent for four weeks.

H. J. TAYLOR.—Pleased to learn that the *Freethinker* has been found so acceptable, also that you are doing what you can to spread the "glad tidings." Pamphlets are being sent. Application for membership will go before the Executive at its next meeting.

D. DALE.—The Lourdes faith-healing stunt does not differ from others, except in the more expensive advertising and elaborate operations. Take away the very few cases where we have to deal with hysteria and the like, and the rest is just the old-fashioned religious bunkum which flourishes so long as there are enough credulous folk to keep it going. Letter a very useful one. Keep on pegging away.

C. F. BUDGE.—The *Daily Worker* exposure of the activities of the Fascist "fifth column" in this country is useful. It is quite certain if a similar campaign was being engineered from elsewhere than from Germany, we should hear more of it from the Government.

W. A. WILLIAMS.—Thanks for what you are doing, also for cuttings, which are very useful, even when not used immediately. They help us to keep in touch with what is going on.

R. G. MOHAMMED.—Will note your suggestion for an article on the subject you name. Liberty in general is in a rather ticklish position at present, and we may rely upon those interested curbing what liberty we have by taking advantage of the present disturbed state of affairs.

G. HALL.—These things will happen. Quite a number of our friends take an extra copy of the *Freethinker* and send it where they think it is needed. The sender did not know what a thoroughly "lost soul" you were already.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Sugar Plums

Now that our new army is having so delightful a time, with spring mattresses to sleep on, officers running round to taste their food to see that it is equal to that supplied in a first-class restaurant, play-rooms with flowers, pictures, and all kinds of games, entertainments galore, and sergeant-majors falling over each other to make the army a home from home affair, might we suggest that to many thousands of soldiers some alteration should be made in the matter of church-parade. Why not make that quite voluntary, and permit those who do not wish to attend to stay away without subjecting themselves to tasks that are suspiciously like punishments.

We fancy there are quite a number of men in the new army who would willingly forego some of the flowers in their rooms, and a few kisses from their officers in return for a little more respect where their private opinions on religion are concerned. We should be pleased to learn from those who ask to be relieved from Church service exactly what happens. All such communications will be treated in strict confidence as to the names of senders.

Despite the carrying about a face that is strongly reminiscent of Dickens' Pecksniff, Sir Samuel Hoare is not a humorous speaker or writer; but he solemnly informed the House of Commons (July 24), that it was only the co-operation of a miracle, Providence, and two policemen that averted a great loss of life when the I.R.A. exploded a bomb in West London. On the other hand, he said that it was a mere hairdresser who was alone responsible for saving Hammersmith Bridge from destruction. We have no means of establishing an equation between Providence, a miracle and two policemen, but it is quite clear that one hairdresser is equal to one miracle and Providence. But we do wish that Sir Samuel Hoare would explain, as he evidently knows, what would have happened in the West End if the two policemen had been there alone, or Providence and the miracle had been the only operative factors. The particularity of Sir Samuel Hoare up to that point is one of the most delightful things we have come across for some time. The House of Commons must be filled with dull dogs not to have asked a question on the subject.

Mr. L. Corina of Bradford has translated the gramophone record on the "Meaning and Value of Freethought," by Mr. Cohen, into Esperanto for *La Granda Familio*, an Esperanto journal published in Holland. The speech is also to be issued in Finnish. Mr. Corina has received many letters from abroad on the translation, telling him that the address has given "new courage to those who at present cannot practise its precepts." In Holland it has aroused interest among the emigrants from dictator countries.

The loyalty which the *Times Literary Supplement* displays towards any book that is written in defence of sheer conservatism deserves recognition, and we have frequently called attention to it, and to its obvious desire to belittle the value of any work of an advanced kind. We expect this is due to two things. First to the policy of the *Times* which does not mind suppressing news when it is against the policy of its proprietors and, second, to the number of writing men whose first thought when writing a book review or a special article is, "What sort of an article does this journal want?" instead of "What kind of treatment does this subject, or book, deserve?"

Here is an example of the way in which it is done. A returned missionary from India has written a book, the main thesis of which appears to be that it is Christianity alone that will save India. That is not a very original thing for a missionary to say, and there is about as much chance of that happening as there is of all Indians growing a white skin and red hair, particularly when the Christianity that is to be adopted is of the true blue order—that of the birth of Jesus from a virgin, the crucifixion and the resurrection. But there is in the way, says the missionary, "the Hindu conception of God as unknown, unknowing, without attribute, incapable of loving or of being loved." That seems a pretty empty sort of a God, answering to nothing at all.

So the reviewer steps in with the suggestion that:—

If they cannot regard the Ultimate Source of all being as a person . . . that may not be because . . . they are so conscious of the greatness of God that they consider what little they know as hardly worth mention.

That is the way the game is played in a journal that must back up Christianity and find something sensible in the nonsense of everyone who writes on behalf of orthodoxy. Otherwise the reviewer might have pointed

out that there are all sorts of religious ideas in India, from fetichism right up to what is called here the "higher mysticism," and that complete honesty might have suggested that in India, with its multitudes of different peoples and number of different religions, there has always been, for several thousand years, a philosophy which contains a very strong dose of Atheism, and that form of Pantheism which is almost another name for Atheism, and when people have reached that stage they do not resort to so crude a religion as Christianity. But that would have involved destroying the missionary picture of India as a recognizable unit, and that unit floundering about for need of the crude Christianity preached by this missionary author. But the orthodox Christian missionary myth must be preserved. Why cannot we have in this country a genuine literary journal?

We are asked to announce that an excursion to Lewes on Wednesday, August 23 has been arranged by the Ethical Union. Train will leave Victoria Station at 10.45, and the party will be conducted round the City. Tea will be taken at the house in which Thomas Paine lived. Train fare, tea and all gratuities will be included in the ticket—price 9s. Those wishing to join the party should apply to Miss N. Freeman, 12 Palmer Street, S.W.1.

We note that Mr. Alfred Noyes has not altered the text of his eulogy of Voltaire in its new edition (with new Preface). As a Catholic protest against and defiance of Catholic intolerance, we applaud the gesture. We have neither the will nor the power to censor this or any book. Nor are we disposed to dispute Mr. Noyes' contention that Voltaire was a "religious" man. He certainly believed in Deity, and as Ingersoll says, he believed in the "religion of humanity." It is not the sceptics, as Mr. Noyes seems to suppose, who have vilified this great humanist. It is the Christian world, Catholic and Protestant, which has assailed his life and character with the filthiest and most baseless of lies. That he was the greatest enemy the Bible and its God had ever had, may perhaps explain why Voltaire's name has been consistently subjected to the foulest of Christian slanders..

## Some Bible Studies

### I.

WHEN all is said and done, most, if not *all*, Christians and Jews fall back upon the Bible as a sort of final answer to any religious difficulty. They might drag in history, or science, or criticism, to their aid, but it is the Bible that will in the end clinch the matter. A man might call himself a Modernist, or a Unitarian, or be ready to give up nearly everything which we call "divine" but he will nearly always, when hard-pressed, quote the Bible against the complete unbeliever. He will often do this even if he himself is ready to disbelieve almost all the narratives which, in that "holy" work, are most patently absurd.

Even the Roman Catholic, with all the weight of Church tradition behind him, must in the ultimate fall back upon "God's Word," as it is after all his only proof that Jesus said anything to Peter. Roman Catholics are however in a little dilemma. Their Rule of Faith is the Church, but to prove that it is the Church, they are obliged to quote the famous text about Peter being a Rock—the Rock being, of course, really the Roman Catholic Church. But it is the Church which guarantees the authenticity of the text; so that one gets a beautiful argument in a circle—the Bible guaranteeing the Church, and the Church guaranteeing the Bible. So far, I have never seen a convincing reply to this though there have been many attempts.

Nowadays Bible believers do not care to deal too much with many of the old irrefutable proofs that the Bible is divine. Prophecy, for example, was one of them, and it is amusing to find how very few are the references to these in such papers as the *Church Times* or the *Universe*—though both journals are, it should be noted, far more inclined to Fundamentalism than they like their readers to see or think. They will defend the Bible *in toto* when they are cornered because their creeds and traditions force them to, but they prefer to talk airily as if the authenticity of the Bible was no longer in doubt, and other matters were far more pressing.

But it was not always so. There was a time when Prophecy was in the front line of apologetics and deemed quite invulnerable. Dr. Keith, about a hundred years ago, made himself quite famous with his work *On the Prophecies*, which proved beyond all doubt that Bible prophecies had been literally fulfilled, or would be, or were in the course of complete fulfilment. "Prophecy," he categorically declared "is a demonstration of divine knowledge; as miracles, in the restricted acceptance of the word, are a demonstration of divine power. Prophecies being true, revelation is established as a fact." And another famous old divine, Dr. Hitchcock, insisted that "the predictions concerning Christ are so clear, so detailed and circumstantial, as to constitute together one of the most important proofs of the inspiration of the Bible and of the truth of Christianity." Strange that such emphatic language is no longer emulated in high church circles. Our bishops much prefer to talk about the wonderful love of Christ, and how he went about "curing the sick"—though in this last connexion they rarely add that the healing was done with miracles. A good many of us would be only too glad to make the blind see if we could do it by a miracle.

The modern difficulties about prophecies are that so many can be quoted which never were fulfilled, and are never likely to be. Isaiah says quite clearly that Babylon will never be inhabited again, and that wild beasts will "cry in the desolate houses" and so on. Babylon is, and has been for centuries, a thriving city. Nebuchadnezzar was going to destroy Tyre utterly, according to Ezekiel. Tyre still stands after twenty-four centuries. Isaiah also prophesied that Damascus was going to be a heap of ruins, and Damascus is one of the most flourishing cities in Asia. Amos predicted that Jeroboam "shall die by the sword," but the book of Kings merely says that he slept with his fathers and gives no hint of a violent death. One could go on giving scores of examples, but so patent are the facts that church scholars keep as clear from prophecies as they do from Freethought arguments.

Of course there are some Christian sects who, to account for their own fantastic beliefs, are obliged to rely almost entirely on the Word and its Prophecies—the capital P here denoting their capital importance. Foremost amongst these strange people are the British Israelites, who depend perhaps more on prophecy than any other Christians. They claim that the prophecies relating to Israel are quite distinct from those relating to Judah and that, rightly understood, the Israel ones point to the English people as being true Israelites, and quite distinct from true Jews. It is difficult to take seriously the many books and pamphlets devoted to proving the most hopeless claims which ever emanated from pious and believing Christians. All one can do is to stand amazed that so many presumably intelligent people really believe that the English people, who surely belong to what is called the white race, originally came from Palestine, and, while there, were a swarthy dark-skinned people exactly like the Arabs to-day; that the Saxons on the Elbe were the near descendants of the Sons of Sax—

that is, I—saac; and that all this was done because, according to Genesis, God promised Abraham "I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth," and "Thou shalt be a father of many nations." The many nations under one (human) father, Abraham, and a Heavenly Father, God, are, of course, the British Commonwealth of Nations which came into being, just as the Bible foretold, some years ago. I have only baldly stated the theory but with ample Bible testimony it is trumpeted forth as being unerringly true—and it is just so much drivel when properly examined.

The truth is that one is never sure what the Bible actually says or means. A good deal of the Hebrew, for instance, is hopelessly obscure—not even the most learned Hebraists being in agreement as to what is meant. The Authorized Version is a notoriously inaccurate translation, the question as to whether it is good "literature" being quite beside the point. The Revised Version had to make thousands of corrections, and competent critics aver that even the R.V. is a poor translation. One has only to compare it with the celebrated version of the orthodox Dr. Robert Young, the *Holy Bible, literally translated out of the original languages*. Young's work has never attained the popularity of the Authorized Version because it effectively demolishes all sorts of dishonest tampering with the "original" documents. It may be said in passing that there are no "original" documents. The Hebrew text is the only one known to us, it is true, but it differs so considerably from that which the Septuagint translators had before them, that one is forced to the conclusion that there was another text altogether before the present one. Nobody knows what that text really was, and unless some extraordinary finds take place, nobody is ever likely to know. All traces were obviously destroyed when the present text was compiled.

Young was obliged to go to the "received" texts, but even here he has done some iconoclastic work. And, curiously enough, he makes a special point of dealing with one of the texts so confidently relied upon by the British Israelites. The Authorized Version gives God's words to Abraham as "Thou shalt be a father of many nations." Young says that here is translated as a *future* tense what is in the Hebrew the *past* tense. The correct translation of the passage should be "Thou **HAST** become the father of a multitude of nations." The Authorized Version constantly makes the same mistake, that is, translating as the *future* what is in the "original" the *past* tense. According to the Bible then, Abraham was already "the Father of many Nations" when his name was changed from Abram to Abraham; but this little fact will make no difference whatever to the believers in, and wealthy supporters of, the British Israelite theories. The failure of a prophecy or even the fact that what was once considered a prophecy but is now no longer held to be one, never will change the faith of a true believing Christian. The more silly a belief is, and the more it has utterly failed, only strengthens real Faith in a genuine Fundamentalist.

But the scholars and apologists of Christianity these days do not care very much for Prophecy. Like so many of the unshakable props of that religion it has been discreetly shelved. And with very good reason, too.

H. CUTNER

The delusions of Christianity are fatal to genius and originality: they limit thought.—*Shelley*.

Is the earth only a hospital? Are health and heaven to come? *Ruskin*.

## The Medieval Scene\*

(Concluded from page 470)

THIS attitude to Nature, the neglect of Science (= Knowledge) and its meliorative agencies, is reflected in the order, or disorder, of intimate communal and domestic existence. It has been said in another connexion, the outstanding feature thereof was *Dirt*: "dirt in the house, dirt in the street, dirt in the person, dirt in the vocabulary." Dr. Coulton presents graphic evidence of this phenomenon.

A while back I was examining the site of a fort along the line of the Roman wall in the neighbourhood of Hexham, of which only foundations remain. It stood on a rise from the Tyne, in a delightful spot, near where N. Tyne joins the main river. Outside the fort and close to the river itself were the remains of a series of baths, formerly provided with means of heating. Evidently, in this northern atmosphere, the Legions believed in the virtue and comfort of cleanliness. Whatever the habits of the successors in this respect—the general influence of the Church appears scarcely favourable to the emulation of such virtues with their material accessories.

Let us again transcribe some illustrations taken from Cambridge as a typical county borough. . . . On entering the town we go to our inn and retire to bed soon after curfew, where the fleas are live company. There is little temptation to go out after dark and there may be considerable danger. Leaves-droppers and night-walkers, men who prowl on the chance of robbery and manslaughter, are constant objects of medieval town legislation. Churchyards are utilized for commercial and municipal purposes. Booths were often erected in the churchyards and fairs might be held there. "Gallows, the stocks, the pillory, the cucking-stool and the penal tumbril, which form conspicuous objects in streets or the market-place, are kept there as sanctions for the municipal and commercial laws. The gallows are mainly for theft." . . . Very common presentments testify to disorder and filth in the streets; dung-heaps are ubiquitous, though an advance was made in 1401 by the enactment that such heaps should be cleared every week; loose pigs rooted amid the garbage; while "certain open gutters made by the masters of Michaelhouse and Gonville Hall ran from those colleges to the High Street, through which many masters and scholars had access to the schools of the University, which gave out an abominable stench, and so corrupted the air that many masters and scholars passing fell sick thereof." . . . This case brought down royal interference and the first Urban Sanitary Act in English history, that of 1388, was passed by a Parliament held at Cambridge, and preceded by active measures to make the town presentable for this assembly.

Writing to Wolsey's physician towards the end of our period, in 1524, Erasmus observes:—

I often wonder and grieve to think why Britain has now been afflicted so many years with chronic pestilence, especially the Sweating Sickness, a disease which seems almost peculiar to that land. . . . First, they never consider towards which quarter of the heaven their windows or doors look. Next, their halls are almost always so constructed that no air can be carried through them, as Galen earnestly warns us. . . . Again, almost all the floors are of clay and rushes from the marshes, so carelessly renewed that the foundation sometimes remains for twenty years, harbouring there below spittle and vomit and urine of dogs and men, beer that hath been cast forth, and remnants of fishes and other filth unnamable. Hence, with the changes of weather, a vapour exhales, which in my judgment is far from wholesome

\* *Medieval Panorama*, G. G. Coulton, 1938.

for the human body. . . . I feel certain that the island would be far more healthy if they gave up the use of rushes; it would help also if the multitude could be persuaded to a sparer diet and more moderate use of salt meat; and, again, if public opinion required of the officials that the streets should be less defiled with filth and urine, and that the roads in the neighbourhood should be cared for. You will laugh, I know, at my idleness which allows me to trouble myself about such things. . . . Yet I wished to advise that, if my judgment be consonant to your own, you should persuade the great folk of these things: for, in past time, Kings were wont to care for such.

Internal furnishing was correspondingly meagre; the best houses had few bedrooms—draughty and cold, with expensive hangings among the more wealthy. A trestle-table served all purposes, few chairs, some sort of settees or stools. "Even Kings and Popes had no easy chairs, but would often sit on their beds to receive ambassadors." The fork was not yet invented for meals; handkerchiefs were almost unknown. Folk ordinarily slept either naked or in their day clothes. The fire burned in a brazier in the hall—the smoke escaping as best it could through the roof; though stone chimneys were being introduced about the time of Erasmus. Artificial light was expensive; in its cheapest form it was a dim cresset of oil or a rush-light of mutton fat. . . .

The attitude of the laity to the Church and its ministrants is a highly diversified consideration. Whatever the origins of the Christian Church, it inspired in its early devotees a sufficiency of fanaticism, in face of hostility and persecution, to establish its influence through the Roman world in a period of change. But it came from a particular ethnical social medium. Carried into northern regions, when it rose to power in the West, it met with far different ethnical and psychic types. The subject is one, we can indicate in passing. Here the laity in our period are continually charged with indifference to its ordinances by zealous churchmen, though allowance must be made for bias. The writer of *Dives and Pauper*, in Chaucer's day (presumably a Franciscan) complains:—

The people nowadays is full undevout to God and to Holy Church, and they love but little men of Holy Church, and they ben loth to come in Holy Church when they be bound to come thither, and full loth to hear God's service. Late they come and soon they go away. They have lieves go to the tavern to hear a song of Robin Hood, or of some ribaldry, than for to hear Mass or Matins or any other of God's service or any Word of God. . . .

Ordinary folk it would appear had only a vague notion of the service itself, "for the Mass was an *opus operatum* independently of the hearer." Berthold of Regensburg, a famous Franciscan preacher, is reported: "It irks some to stand decently for a short hour in Church, while God is being served with singing or reading; they laugh and chatter as if they were at a fair; and ye women, ye never give your tongues rest from useless talk! . . ." At this a cry of expostulation rises from the audience: "Yea, Brother Berthold, but we understand not the Mass, and therefore can we not pray as we had need, nor may we feel such devotion, as if we understood the Mass. The sermon indeed we can follow word by word, but not the Mass; we know not what is being said or read, we cannot comprehend it." . . . St. Thomas More also admits how little the congregation understood the Mass. The poverty and general limitations of clerical education itself are so illustrated in detail.

A singular popular reaction to the central feature of the Ritual; co-incidentally a pervading dislike of the priest as such. For nearly a thousand years before the Reformation "the maxim had been current in

Church Law that the laity are thoroughly inimical to the clergy." . . . It was ill-omened to meet a priest by the way. "The priest was too often then what Lady Duff-Gordon describes in her *Home Life in Italy*; the man in black who takes toll of the parish, who is seldom seen in the house until he brings with him the Last Uncction, and the shadow of death." Dr. Coulton offers some personal reflexions on the persisting belief in a future state; though he gives a lurid presentation of medieval Eschatology in its developed phantasy, where a part of the joys of the blessed is to hear the howls of the damned—a fate to which most part of the world was condemned. The doctrinal aspect of the Church is removed from our present consideration, except that the priest held the key to this mystery. The man who hated his parson most might well be he who deeply felt and shrank from his supernatural powers. "Of hell and purgatory he never had been allowed to doubt. Whenever he entered his parish church there stared from its walls the ghastly picture of the Last Judgment—blood and fire and devils in such pitiless realism that when they come to light to-day by sympathetic restorers they are fain to cover them again under whitewash."

Allowing for a few high lights stressed by protagonists (e.g., G. K. Chesterton) the pervading impression is one of

coarseness, ignorance, brutality. . . . Much perforce must here be passed over, but we may note the high prevalence of homicide.

The coroner's rolls show manslaughter in enormous preponderance over death by accident. "It is impossible to judge at this distance whether most of these cases would pass for wilful murder at the present day; but the statistics seem to point to at least ten times as many definite murders per head of population, and possibly even twice or thrice that proportion."

The conditions illustrated in this monumental survey give a measure of the advance made in amenities and decencies of living since the constructive influence of the Institution was at length countered. Particularly so in our own country during the last one hundred years, with the application, *pari passu* with freedom of investigation, of valid science and technical invention. The unpardonable sin against the human spirit, of the Church, in the day of its power, lies in its prevention by ruthless terrorism of the emergence of any new principle of betterment—mental or social—contrary to its own dogma.

AUSTEN VERNEY

#### EARTH AND MAN

Dust of my dust—last and supremest race  
Of races lifting on from age to age—  
This conscious creature's awful pilgrimage  
Maddens the eyes of space.

Oh build upon his bones a better thing;  
And yet a link to life's eternal chain;  
Depose humanity, or once again  
Thy primal silence fling.

Heed my long agonies, and let them cease  
Lighten the horror of my endless woe;  
From off this bleeding bosom bid him go  
And give thy planet peace.

But if thou shalt ordain we never part,  
Then, Mother, pity me by pitying him;  
Despatch thy swiftest, gold-winged seraphim  
With Reason to his heart.

Send them and this thy gift; let Reason reign,  
So that a reconciliation come  
Between the children and their ancient home,  
Ere darkness fall again.

EDEN PHILLPOTTS

## Dolet: The Freethought Martyr\*

(Continued from page 477)

### II.

DOLET was born at Orleans in the year 1509, probably on the 3rd of August, the day on which Saint Etienne's relics were "invented." Little is known of his parentage. One absurd story represents him as the natural son of Francis the First; but, as Mr. Christie observes, "at the date of Dolet's birth Francis, then Duke of Valois, was not quite fifteen years of age." Voulte, one of his enemies, says that his father died at the hands of the public executioner. This, however, is probably a slander. Dolet himself says that his parents were "in no mean or low position," and that his father attained to civic honours. Both appear to have died while he was still young. Yet they, or other relations and friends, secured for him a liberal education.

His studies at Paris began at the age of twelve. There he learned Latin, and contracted that deep admiration of Cicero which he always retained. He studied rhetoric under Nicholas Berauld, "one of the greatest masters of eloquence and of Latin scholarship of the time," a man who was much greater than his books, and who had the signal honour of being tutor to the three great Colignys. Berauld was suspected of sympathy with the reformers, and it is probable that his toleration and breadth exercised a beneficial influence on the mind of Dolet.

At the age of seventeen Dolet went to Padua, to pursue his studies still further at that renowned seat of learning. The intellectual atmosphere of this place profoundly affected him. "At Padua," says Mr. Christie, "an independence and freedom of thought existed which would have been sought in vain elsewhere." At Padua, wrote Paleario, in 1530, "dwell poets, orators, and celebrated philosophers. Learning has taken refuge there from choice, and has there found an asylum where Pallas teaches all the arts: in short, there is no place where we can better gratify a taste for reading and learning." One of its chief figures at that time, Cardinal Bembo, was a thorough Pagan, who refused to read the Epistles of St. Paul lest they should vitiate his Greek style! Padua was a centre of Freethought.

The University of Padua was at this time, and during the whole of the century, the head-quarters of a philosophical school altogether opposed to the doctrines of Christianity, but which was divided into two sects, one pantheistic, and the other, if not absolutely materialist, at least nearly approaching to it. Both professed adherence to the doctrines of Aristotle, and in terms acknowledged him as their only master and teacher. But as in the Christian Church we have read of some who followed Paul and others Cephas, so among the Aristotelians of Padua there were some who followed the commentaries of Averroes, and others those of Alexander of Aphrodisias. Both disbelieved the immortality of the individual soul, the former on the ground of its absorption. The other sect was in fact, if not in terms, materialist, and absolutely denied the immortality of the soul; nor could its doctrine, so at least its opponents asserted, be distinguished from pure Atheism. Of this latter school Pietro Pomponazzo, better known under the Latin form of Pomponatius, the most distinguished philosopher of the day, was the acknowledged representative. Born in 1462, he studied both medicine and philosophy at Padua, where, being still young, he was appointed one of the professors

of philosophy, and distinguished himself by maintaining the pure doctrine of Aristotle (that is, as he interpreted it, materialism) against his older colleague Achillini, who followed the doctrine and teaching of Averroes. It was in 1516 that he published his treatise, "De Immortalitate Animæ," in which he maintains that the doctrine of immortality is not to be found in Aristotle, is altogether opposed to reason, and is based only on the authority of revelation and of the Church, to both of which, when his work was attacked, he professed unbounded reverence. His book was replied to by his pupil Contarini, and was attacked by the Inquisition and publicly burnt at Venice. But it met with a defender in Bembo, the constant friend and protector of freedom of thought, and by his influence the book was permitted to be printed with some corrections and a statement by Pomponatius that he submitted wholly to revelation and the Church, and did not in any manner oppose the doctrine of immortality, but only the philosophical arguments which were generally used in its support. This, however, as Hallam remarks, "is the current language of philosophy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries which must be judged by other presumptions." Pompanatius died in 1525. His celebrity and influence long continued, and were at their height when Etienne Dolet arrived at Padua, where for three years he sat at the feet of the disciples of Pomponatius, drinking in without doubt those materialistic doctrines which, if they did not entirely harmonize with the doctrines of his master Cicero, were at least contrary to Mediaevalism and superstition, and therefore congenial to his mind.

We are thankful that Dolet pursued his studies amid such surroundings, but we also reflect with a sigh that his after-sufferings were only its natural result. At Padua there was ample toleration, for its scholars and thinkers were numerous enough to ensure their safety; but when the heretical ideas born and nourished there were carried abroad to less favoured cities, they brought upon the possessor the bitterest persecution and often a cruel death.

But "literature and not philosophy was Dolet's mistress." After learning from the latter how erroneous was the orthodoxy of his day, he turned lovingly to the former, which he again wooed under the guidance of Simon Villanovus, whose learning, industry, and genius were praised by the best judges of the time, including Rabelais himself. This distinguished man died at the early age of thirty-five, and was deeply mourned by Dolet, his most attached pupil. An epitaph composed by the affectionate young scholar on his master is worth citing as a mental index. The original is in Latin, but Mr. Christie gives us an English rendering:—

I bid you welcome, reader, and ask your attention for a moment. That fate, which mortals consider to be a misfortune, namely to die early, I think a most happy lot. Wherefore congratulate me on my death and do not lament me, for by death I cease to be mortal. Farewell, and pray for my repose.

M. Boulmier remarks that "one feels in these few lines, mournful and icy as the bronze they cover, that incurable dissatisfaction with the world, that bitter contempt of life, that cold and sombre aspiration towards the repose of death, which forms a distinctive trait in the character of the unhappy Dolet." Mr. Christie, however, demurs to this, and says that to him Dolet appears to have been of a joyous temperament, and fond of life, for the sake of cultivating his own mind, and also for the sake of producing works that might procure him the fame for which he so eagerly longed.

An elegiac poem in Latin on Villanovus gives us a further insight into Dolet's state of mind at this time. We again take Mr. Christie's English version:—

\* Etienne Dolet, the Martyr of the Renaissance: A Biography. By R. C. Christie. Macmillan & Co. A review reprinted from the *Freethinker* of 1881.

O thou whom probity and sincerity made my friend,  
 Thou who wast joined to me in an indissoluble union,  
 Thou whom kind fortune gave to me for a comrade,  
 Thou my companion, now taken from me by cruel death;  
 Art thou wrapped in eternal sleep and in profound darkness,  
 So that in vain I mournfully address thee in my song?  
 Yet what love compels me to do I shall sing, though thou  
 may'st be deaf to it,  
 I am not ashamed to be accused of too tender an affection.  
 Farewell, dear friend, the one whom I have loved more than  
 my own eyes,  
 And whom love compels me to love for ever more and more.  
 May thy nights be tranquil and thy sleep quiet,  
 For ever silent, but for ever well.  
 And if in the land of shadows there is any perception,  
 Do not reject my prayers, but love one to whom thou wilt  
 always be dear.

This poem, which Mr. Christie describes as one of Dolet's best, both as to language and sentiment, reveals his intense scepticism. His heart yearns after his dead friend, but his intellect cannot trace his presence beyond the tomb. The hinted possibility of continued life is little more than a poetic artifice, and at the utmost it does not exceed the *grand peut-être* of Rabelais—a great Perhaps!

G. W. FOOTE

## Correspondence

HAVELOCK ELLIS

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—I much enjoyed Mr. George Bedborough's article on the above.

An appropriate example of Havelock Ellis's humour is the following:—

"If the inspired genius who wrote the delightful book of Genesis were among us to-day instead of two cherubims with flaming swords, he would probably have placed at the door of his Eden two policemen with truncheons."

W. KENT

## THE "THIRD" ALTERNATIVE

SIR,—In reading Mr. Cutner's article, The "Third" Alternative, in your issue, July 16, I find it difficult to discover the grounds for regarding the attitude of the Dean of Oriel College as, apparently, a new *alternative* to the position of those who in company with Loisy and Renan accept, or with Robertson and Couchoud deny, the historicity of Jesus.

To me this alternative reads as a return to and restatement of the primitive belief on which the Christian Church, has taken its stand from earliest times down to the present day.

Is there anything new—to quote Mr. Cutner's words—about an "Incarnation," that Jesus really was the Son of the Living God or God Himself? Is not this all provided for, so to speak, in the Creeds still recited wherever Christianity holds the field?

As regards the question which I have raised here, there seems no need, even if space permitted, to allude to the part played by mystery religion in handing down to posterity the Jesus of the Gospels. This is freely admitted by those who, like the present writer, believe in his historicity, and who is also one who gains much valuable information on many subjects from Mr. Cutner in your pages.

MAUD SIMON

People say things at first because other people have said them, and then they persist in them, because they have said them themselves.

## Obituary

CHARLES LAUCHLIN MCGOWN

WE regret to announce the death of Charles McGown, at his home in Cambuslang, Glasgow, age 61.

Mr. McGown was a veteran Freethinker in Glasgow, although in recent years he devoted most of his leisure time to social service work. He leaves behind him a family of Freethinkers to continue his work for secularism.

A Secular Service was read by the Branch Secretary, Mrs. Whitefield, at Riddrie Cemetery, where Charles McGown has found a last resting place.—M.I.W.

## 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, A Lecture.

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place): 7.30, Mrs. N. B. Buxton.

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. G. W. Fraser.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH (Brockwell Park): 7.0, Mr. F. A. Ridley. Rushcroft Road, opposite Brixton Town Hall, 8.0, Tuesday, Mr. P. Goldman. Liverpool Grove, Walworth Road, Friday, Mr. F. A. Ridley.

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.

### COUNTRY

#### OUTDOOR

BIKENHEAD BRANCH N.S.S. (Haymarket): 8.0, Saturday, Mr. D. Robinson. Catherine Street off Grange Road, 8.0, Wednesday, Mr. D. Robinson.

BLYTH (The Fountain): 7.0, Monday, Mr. J. T. Brighton. CHESTER-LE-STREET (Bridge End): 8.0, Friday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Mound): 7.0, Mrs. Muriel Whitefield (Glasgow)—"Still More Determinism."

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

MIDDLESBROUGH (Davison Street): 7.15, Thursday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

NORTH SHIELDS (Harbour View): 7.0, Tuesday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

PRESTON (Town Hall Square): 3.0 and 7.0, Sunday, Mr. J. Clayton.

READ: 7.30, Friday, Mr. J. Clayton.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Gill Bridge Avenue): 7.0, Mr. G. H. Dalkin (Stockton)—"Gentle Jesus."

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