

THE FREETHINKER

EDITED BY CHAPMAN COHEN

Vol. LXI.—No. 19

SUNDAY, MAY 11, 1941

PRICE THREEPENCE

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Views and Opinions

Frauds of Faith

SEVERAL hundred thousands of crosses, blessed by Cardinal Hinsley, have been served out to Roman Catholic soldiers, the cost of the medals being raised by public subscription. We may take it that the wearers of the crosses believe that these medals will in some unknown way protect them from being shot by German bullets. But Cardinal Hinsley? Does he really believe that a soldier wearing one of these crosses stands a better chance of living throughout the war than other men in the same situation who are undecorated? Of course he would probably say that he does so believe. But those who can recall the tales told by Cardinal Hinsley concerning the International Freethought Conference, will be neither surprised if he does say so, nor convinced by his saying it. He will be able, when the war is over, to tell his followers who wore the medals and returned safely home, how very wise they were to wear a godly medal. He will not bother to say how many medal wearers did not return. By counting the hits and ignoring the misses one can prove anything.

There are millions of people in this country who daily offer prayers for the safety of those belonging to them. Some are still safe. Those who pray for them will follow the same method of reckoning pursued by Cardinal Hinsley. There are thousands of clergymen, belonging to all denominations, who will also offer up their official prayers for the safety of armed men on the land and on the sea and in the air. Some of these will get through safely, others will not. There are millions of people who pray for recovery from disease of those belonging to them. Some of these will recover. But, again, those who do not recover are left out of the count. God answers the prayers of survivors only.

There are also many people who sell cures calculated to do what medical skill finds it cannot do in a particular situation with any certainty. If this is done by selling something in the shape of a healing belt, or a preparation that is proved to have no curative value whatever, they may be prosecuted and sent to prison as common swindlers. If they are cute enough to turn themselves into a new religious sect, and assert that God works through them, they are safe. Although not ordained clergymen, they come under the shelter of the religious umbrella. They, too, will tell the world how many they have cured. They also will not provide a record of those that have not been cured. And in each case there will be found people who, without lying, will testify that after wearing the medal, or drinking the coloured water or

wearing the magic belt, they have felt better and have recovered from the disease they were supposed to have.

The game is a very old one. There is an ancient story of a Greek who entered a temple and was shown the offerings of those whom the Gods had saved from drowning at sea. "Good," said the Greek, "but where are the gifts of the people who were not saved." At Lourdes there is a collection of crutches of those who have been cured by the goddess of the grotto. But there are no offerings from those who still use crutches. Always it is the hits that are counted. The misses are not mentioned. The Roman Catholic Churches on the continent contain stacks of crutches belonging to those who have been saved by this or that saint. The cure is so easy it is a wonder anyone ignores it.

But do not let us particularize too much. In the City of London stands the Church of St. Blaize. St. Blaize appears to have specialized in sore throats, and once every year there can be seen the Church crowded with men—city men, hardheaded business men (among the easiest men in the world to swindle) praying to St. Blaize to cure them from a sore throat, or to prevent their having one during the coming year. Also there are people who carry a potato in their pocket for the cure of rheumatism, or a rabbit's foot to ward off evil, or a mascot to keep danger at arm's length. And in each case some do not get sore throats for twelve months, others escape dangers, others have good fortune. The potato, the mascot, the rabbit's foot, appear to take on as easily as does God the function of protection. Of course there are as many failures with the cum-rabbit, cum-charm, cum-mascot crowd as with those attending Church and Chapel. But the procedure is the same; the belief is the same; the result is the same; the habit of not counting the misses is the same.

To end this very incomplete list of fantastic absurdities, we have National Days of Prayer to a God, who, if he could do anything to end the war, ought to do it without having a national grovel in his honour. The heads of the Churches start it, a moronic member of the House of Commons asks the Prime Minister whether he will not consider it, if the moment looks favourable the Prime Minister "advises" the King to order it, and the trick is done. It used to be a Day of humiliation and prayer, but of late that has been thought rather too much to expect, and the advertised humiliation is there by inference only. But the same rule applies. If something comparatively good follows, such as the escape of part of the army from Dunkirk with the loss of thousands of men and huge stocks of munitions—which the Germans were able to use in killing some of God's people afterwards, thus prolonging the war—and we complain, we are reminded of the good that followed. God is still with us—in the old-fashioned ineffective manner. And as God is Lord of all there seems more sound philosophy in the story of the sailor who found himself treed by a bear, and as the bear crawled nearer the old salt pulled out a large knife and offered the only prayer he could think of. "Oh God, I don't want you to take my side, but if you don't take the side of the bear there'll be the liveliest fight in the next few minutes that you ever saw in your life."

God and Man

My typewriter has, as usual run its own obstinate course, for I really started these notes intending to call attention to a message from the Saturday sermon given to the readers of the *Daily Telegraph* by the Rev. L. B. Ashby. He says he has had a letter from one of the most bombed places in England. The writer says:—

My faith in God is so strong that I feel, even in air raids, the bombs will go over us, and am not nervous. I live with three sisters, the eldest nearly seventy years of age. We sit in the front room till about 11.30 p.m., when we go asleep in the kitchen.

Presumably the kitchen offers better protection than the other parts of the house, and it shows some little want of faith. It looks as though this four have trust in God up to eleven-thirty and then look after themselves for the rest of the night—perhaps to leave God free to attend to others during the raid hours.

Mr. Ashby, however, draws a different conclusion from the situation. He pictures these "brave souls" sitting with "shining faces" (how on earth does he know they have shining faces?) "proving the value of faith and making an incalculable contribution to the moral steadfastness of the nation." I have just a suspicion that the last few words should have read "making a contribution to the standing of the clergy." But probably Mr. Ashby's modesty prevented his writing in that way. The first characteristic of a Christian priest is humility.

We do not wish to be unkind to this old gentleman (I assume he is of the male kind) and his three sisters, but where Mr. Ashby sees, as one may expect a clergyman to see, the consoling power of belief, we see exhibited a degree of sheer conceit or selfishness, or folly, or most probably a mixture of all three, and I should find their attitude attributable to a mis-directed education. For as this god-guarded four live in a district in which hundreds of people have been killed and wounded, including children and old men and women, young people just setting out on their self-sustained course of life, anyone but a certain type of Christian might well give a thought to others. They might ask, who are we that we shall be protected from danger while so many others are without that protection? Are we of so much greater value to the world than they? What does Mr. Ashby think is the cause of this discrimination? For discrimination there must be if there be a God ruling, and who, as Mr. Ashby believes, can protect, but who evidently does not always do so. For not only are those who do not believe in God, or, believing, do not pray to him, killed and wounded, but those who do believe in him, who do pray to him, are also made to suffer. Does God select haphazard those who shall and those who shall not be bombed? Let Mr. Ashby recall the complaints that are made of the Government not being sufficiently prepared to protect people against the German bombs (to which the Government has a plausible defence that the best that could be done was done, and that no one could foresee all the danger until it was actually made manifest) and then think what would be the state of the public mind if it were known that better and effective steps could have been taken, and that not only were these precautions not taken, but that a handful of friends of the Government—with or without shining faces—were adequately looked after. No Government would have remained in office for a week, and one would not have been surprised if some of the, at present, unused lampposts had been put to an unusual use. The majority of the public are—too late—disgusted with the way in which the Baldwin and Chamberlain Governments played into the hands of both Mussolini and Hitler. What do these people make of a God who saves the possessors of four shining faces and permits hundreds of others to be maimed or killed

Man and God

Now it is not I who say that there is a God who does these things. No Atheist ever accuses God of anything, all he does is to call the attention of the godite to the logical inferences from the theory he propounds. That theory not only fails to fit the facts, it contains the logical conclusions that I have just drawn. One wonders, too, whether Mr. Ashby would have the courage to stand near a bombed house, watching the dead, the wounded, and a few living people being carried out by men who are often taking as great risks as a soldier on the battle field, and tell the men standing round that we have to thank God for the one or two who are saved. We doubt whether he would dare to do so, but if he did there would not be much doubt as to the reply that insulted human nature would give.

Let me say, finally, it may be true that the four with the shining faces believe that it is because they trust in God they are saved. There is nothing uncommon in this frame of mind. We have it displayed by the man who misses a train that crashes, with loss of life to forty or fifty people, and who thanks God for saving *him*. We have it displayed in the thanks given to God by the survivors of a shipwreck that has meant death to a hundred or so passengers, and in scores of similar cases. In the intense and disguised selfishness bred by the Christian faith we note one of the worst influences exerted by religion.

I have said often enough that one of the chief faults of the Christian religion is that it never brings a man face to face with his real self. It provides a cover of decency for his mean motives, and distorts the nature of his better ones. Mr. Ashby thinks he sees in his example evidence of the comfort that faith in God brings. A better understanding of human nature would have taught him that anything in which a man believes will be more comforting than its opposite. What he needs to realize is the price paid for this comfort, in the narrowing of outlook and the depreciation of character. The case of the four shining faces praising God for saving *them*, and ignoring others, is not uncommon. Such cases may be very useful to a priesthood, but they indicate a very foolish, a very conceited, and a very undesirable type of character.

Such people are not of a type that should be encouraged. They stand for selfishness of a dangerous kind. Whatever "moral steadfastness" we have in our midst rests upon something deeper than anything that Christianity has to offer. Many of the medieval theologians taught that the joys of heaven were enhanced by the saved being able to see from there the torments of the damned in hell. Is there anything intrinsically higher or better in four "shining faces," which can thank God for saving them from destruction, while leaving a hundred or a thousand others—babies in arms, aged people, the sick in hospital and those who risk their lives in trying to save the victims of a raid—to their fate? Mr. Ashby thanks God for the four shining ones because their example is contagious. I sincerely hope that such examples will not spread, even though this may injure the trade of the priest.

CHAPMAN COHEN

Thales (640-550 B.C.) made some bold and fortunate conjectures in the science of astronomy. He conjectured the earth to be a sphere and that it revolved round the sun. He believed the fixed stars to be so many suns encircled with other planets like our earth; he believed the moon's light to be a reflection from the sun's on a solid surface; and if we may trust the testimony of ancient authors, he was able to calculate eclipses, and actually predicted the famous eclipse of the sun six hundred and one years before the birth of Christ, which separated the armies of the Medes and Lydians at the moment of engagement.

Tytler, "Universal History."

On Reading

DURING the last two or three decades reading has become a very popular pastime, and those who indulge in it do so for a variety of reasons, e.g., to be entertained or to add to their knowledge. It matters not what a person's taste may be there is, as a rule, someone quite ready and willing to cater for it—always provided he can do so at a profit, a profit to himself. There are others, of course, but they are few in number.

If we wish merely to kill time and have our palate tickled there is plenty of fare, always and everywhere available, that is calculated to do this to a nicety. But nourishing and sustaining food—food for the mind that is—is not so easy to find. Admittedly, thousands of books are published every year, but good books—good in the sense that they are beneficial to the reader—are comparatively few and far between. Sometimes a pick-axe and shovel are required to hack them out of the rubbish that surrounds them.

To the ambitious student, the student of men and the affairs of men, the discovery of a new and enduring book is an event of great importance, and none but those who have had the experience can appreciate just what it means to receive more help from an old friend or to make the acquaintance of a new one. For there is this to be said for books that are helpful: they endear the writer to the reader and create a feeling of regard—of friendship—between him and the reader of which he, the author, may be unaware. And that, surely, is the measure of the writer's worth: the real and lasting good which his books have on those who read them, and the respect to which his work gives birth.

The act of reading, too, varies with the individual. Some can concentrate on a book even in a crowd; others require perfect quiet. It depends, of course, on the reader's sensitiveness to outside influence—his environment, and how this reacts on him. But to be quite alone and undisturbed with a really good book is, in the opinion of some at any rate, to experience one of the greatest thrills that life can bring. To sit at the feet, as it were, of one whom one has grown to admire for his knowledge and wisdom, and to listen attentively to what he has to say, is to drink of the joy of life. There is nothing in the world to surpass it.

The reader with an enquiring mind prefers to buy rather than to borrow a book so that he can, if he wishes to—and in all probability he will wish to—underscore those passages in it which to him are pregnant with interest, contain a new truth or state an old truth in a new way. There is nothing objectionable about this underscoring habit—nothing to which the author, if he knew of it, could take exception! Quite the reverse in fact. The reader does not imply, by what he does, that the writer has not made himself quite clear, and that the underscored passage requires some special emphasis; rather does he mean, by his use of the pencil, that the words he has underlined have made a special appeal to him—hit him right in the eye, as it were, and have become part of his mental equipment—and that he will know just where to find them when he wishes to refresh his memory.

Another habit to which this class of reader is sometimes addicted is to keep his own index and cross-index of those subjects in which he is particularly interested, so that whenever he wishes to confirm any impression or belief which he may have, he knows just where to turn for such confirmation. Having made the necessary entries in his index book, he does not have to charge his memory with a mass of detail, because henceforth his index directs him unhesitatingly to those channels of information that have helped to

educate him, and it gives him a feeling of security—security against coming to a wrong conclusion or making a false statement.

And, of course, a book that makes a real and lasting impression on its owner is never read and finished with. Even if, after first reading, it is—as may happen—handled affectionately, as something that is really human and inspiring, and then given lodgement in a book-case, it will be taken out again and re-read, maybe more than once. That is the effect which a worth-while book has on the receptive reader: he goes to it again and again for further sustenance.

Between such a reader and his books there develops, in time, a feeling of affinity which it is impossible to assess. He regards them as priceless, personal possessions, and although they may not be of great value, measured in terms of pounds, shillings and pence, he would not part with them to anyone, no matter what sum were offered. They have helped to make him what he is, and, in his opinion, it would be a mean and unworthy thing, an unforgivable crime, to sacrifice such real and intimate friends for mere money.

It is doubtful if one person can tell another *how* to read—although recently attempts have been made to do this, and it would seem that all that is now required to fill the bill is one more volume on *How to Read a Book*. No two people are exactly alike in mental outfit, taste and disposition; consequently no two people are likely to tackle a book and respond to it in precisely the same way—notwithstanding all the advice that may be given.

Reading is a personal matter, depending for its success and enjoyment on the character and education of the individual, what condition of mind he or she may be in when settling down to read, and what he and she hope to get out of the book to which they have turned their attention. One can be recommended what to read—although there is some danger even in that. But, for the reasons given, one can no more be told how to read than one can be told how to make love and be successful in marriage. The success or failure of both are the result of many forces, some of which we may not be fully aware. Try to read understandingly is about all that can be said, and that is saying a lot in a few words and implies a good deal.

GEO. B. LISSENDEN

Outlook

I saw along the way of life,
The sign-posts of the creeds;
Like bending reeds
Whipped by the breeze,
Bowed down by storm and strife.

My heart refused to wander
Along their barren ways;
For me no rays
Of grace or praise,
They only sought to pander.

To the fear of God's high vengeance
That chains down all mankind;
Blown like the wind
Left like the rind,
Yet claiming their obeisance.

I have no fear of any clash,
The sword it must not rust,
Man is not lust
Though only dust,
Life quickens from the lash

For me, I only know that strife
Means more than creed or priest;
It works like yeast
Subdues the beast,
It is the sword of life.

HARRY SEPTON

The "Man" Jesus

II.

ALMOST without exception, if one were to ask for evidence that a man called Jesus Christ lived—apart altogether from the God Jesus—both Christians and Jews point to Josephus. The exceptions are very few, for very few people have ever read Josephus, and there seems to be still fewer who have ever read the elaborate arguments against the authenticity of the two passages which refer to Jesus. Many Freethinkers, of course, know the arguments—at least those who have done some reading on the question; the two passages I shall not quote here as they have been reproduced so often in our literature.

Briefly then, it has been pointed out by scores of orthodox theologians that it was impossible for Josephus to have written them as the longer of the two clearly and emphatically declares that Jesus was the Messiah—and no orthodox Jew as Josephus has claimed himself to be could have made such a statement. Moreover, the passage in question would have been pounced upon by the early Church Fathers in their discussions with Jews, and up to the time of Eusebius it was never once quoted. Gibbon dismisses it with scorn, while among hosts of other Christian and Unitarian writers, Chrysostom, Photius, Lardner, Warburton, Giles, Baring-Gould, Chalmers and Milman, all agree with Gibbon. Obviously, if the first passage is such a rank forgery, the same arguments against it can be applied to the second passage.

But the real point to note is that nowhere else does Josephus speak about the Christians. He knows nothing about the wonderful Apostles, nothing about their martyrdom for Christ Jesus's sake, nothing about the way in which thousands of Jews were converted, nothing about the quarrels between them and the Gentile Christians, or the way in which Peter, Paul, and Barnabus had holy rows in the early Christian communities. It is simply incredible that an historian such as Josephus was, writing often minute details of contemporary—and often puerile—events should have so completely ignored the tremendous part played by the new religion, even if he were convinced that it did not come directly from God.

Christian historians have been at their wit's end trying to account for the "silence" of Josephus, vainly ascribing it to his prejudice as a Jew. But they can't have it both ways. If he was prejudiced as a Jew, he could not have called Jesus the Messiah. This passage is a standing testimony to the outrageous way in which Christians were always ready to lie and forge for the Lord's sake—on the admission of their own writers.

Now as the prop of Josephus with regard to a man Jesus has come down with a bang, both Christians and Jews have almost despairingly looked round for a way out of their difficulty and a way to save their case. It is no use merely saying there was a man called Jesus, they have to prove it. So—for some of them it came as if from heaven—someone pointed out that there was a Slavonic translation of Josephus in which was a somewhat unpleasant picture of Jesus. This surely could not be forged by Christians as their tendency was to glorify him. As is well known they have done this to such good effect, that if we think of Jesus at all, we visualize him as a golden-haired Aryan instead of, as he would have been if he ever lived, a dark-skinned Arab.

This Slavonic translation of Josephus was, of course, well known before Dr. R. Eisler turned his

critical faculties upon it. I have unfortunately not read his book, but will do so one day, and discuss some of his conclusions in these columns more in detail. Here I wish to point out that he claims the Slav text was made from an Aramaic original of Josephus though, as the translation is a thirteenth-century one, he must have some very learned arguments in his favour. Eleven or twelve hundred years is a very long time—if we look back such a distance of time we land ourselves in the era of the early Saxons, a period so remote that it is difficult to think about it. Moreover, no MSS. of Josephus, except copies of the Greek text and this Slav one, have come down to us, as far as I know. If Josephus wrote in Aramaic we know nothing about the text. We are not even quite certain if there ever was an Aramaic text, as Milman in his *History of the Jews* says that "Josephus first wrote the *History of the Jews* in the Syro-Chaldaic language," which may have been Aramaic for all I know, but which would have been so characterized by Milman if he had known.

In any case, as we do not know who translated the Slav text, and as we have no Aramaic or Syro-Chaldaic text with which to compare the translation, a good deal of Eisler is—as one of my critics rightly says—simply "speculation." And what I have to complain of is that on this question we get a good deal more "speculation" than evidence—especially when critics who set out to give me evidence retail speculation instead, and then naively admit that even they prefer to "leave it out of account."

Now it must be evident that the man who made the Slav translation knew Aramaic or Syro-Chaldaic, and he was probably a Jew. I admit my point is also speculation, but I ask in all seriousness, if Christians could insert an impudent forgery into the Greek text, why could not a Jew who, for reasons connected with the treatment of his race during the Dark and Middle Ages, insert another kind of forgery into his Slavonic text? Instead of a beautiful Saxon or European figure for Jesus, why could not the translator make his Jesus particularly unpleasant? I decline to accept either the wonderful Messiah of the Greek Josephus, or the Messianic pretender of the Slavonic Jesus, as real evidence for the existence of a man Jesus. Not until an authentic manuscript or copy of the Jewish writer in Aramaic or Syro-Chaldaic comes to hand can we be absolutely certain what he wrote. We can delude ourselves in any amount of speculation, but that is all. And speculation is not evidence.

There were two other Jewish writers who surely should have mentioned Jesus or the Christians. They are Justus of Tiberiade, who wrote about the same time as Josephus and of the same events, and Philo who was, as far as we can tell, certainly alive in the year 40 A.D. Neither of them mentions Jesus or knows anything about the wonderful happenings which made Jerusalem the centre of the (so-called) greatest event the world has ever seen—the birth of Christianity. Nobody seems to have bothered forging nonsense into their works, and so Christian writers are generally amazed at the absence of anything whatever in them relating to the early history of the new religion. Their excuses for the silence of Justus and Philo are very comical—to give one example, we are implored not to make too much of the argument from silence.

If, in spite of what I have said, readers still believe in the authenticity of the passages in Josephus, they are at liberty to do so, of course. This is still a free country.

H. CUTNER

Books Worth While

Their Isle of Desire, by Jack McLaren, published by Stanley Paul at 8s. 6d.

OF the many writers of life in the South Seas there is probably no one more qualified by experience to speak with authority than the author of this book. Apart from his knowledge of the islands, Mr. McLaren knows the Australian Aborigines as very few do. He has lived amongst them for 8 years, and has made a most careful and exhaustive study of their habits, customs and taboos; and although not claiming to be a scientist, he has probably acquired more knowledge of these interesting and fast disappearing people than any living man.

Perhaps Mr. McLaren is quoting from his own experience when he tells us what great readers many of these traders in lonely parts of the world are, and how much knowledge they amass. The prevalent idea that the trader is a man who spends half his day in a state of drunkenness, and that he shoots natives and crocodiles for recreation is exploded. However this story does not deal with Australia, but is woven around one of the South Sea Islands, those islands of which the author is so fond.

Here we have romance, full of excitement and with plenty of love interest.

A white trader living on the island amongst natives only, has suddenly forced upon him a group of white people whose boat has drifted to the island in a gale. They are a cinema photographer, his wife and baby, a spinster and a Jap. The ordinary peaceful life of the trader immediately becomes full of new interest. The eternal triangle looms large and the story, like all good stories, becomes better and more exciting as one reads on.

Reading one day from a London paper which Grey the photographer had brought with him, Matt Sleeman the trader remarked—"I see this paper says 'More Flogging urges Army Chief,' say, Mr. Grey, there seems to be some pretty grim guys in your civilized old England. Give me my easy-going savages here every time." "Oh well, the Army you know—" began Grey excusingly, but Sleeman broke in—"Its not that sort of Army, its the chief of the Salvation Army," and then continuing to read from the paper—"But that was only a prelude to what happened when a certain type of woman got on to the subject. Later papers contained accounts of a large gathering of women shouting in favour of flogging, screaming down anyone who attempted to voice an opposite opinion, an unbeautiful picture of a herd of hysterical females screaming for lash-covered backs, more lash-seared bloodstained backs."

The cinema-man's opinion of his own work and Hollywood strikes quite a new note. Speaking to the trader he says—"A camera-man's respect for actors and actorines was, in round figures, nil. The actors did only what they were told—words, gestures, expressions, movements, were all in obedience to someone else's orders—but the camera-men, like the other technicians, were highly skilled blokes, full of difficulty acquired knowledge and constantly called upon to use their initiative and resource. They and the other technicians were studio nobility, the actors were a lot of plebs."

Such opinions are quite enough to send the average film-fan crazy with rage.

There is a native sorcerer who deals in witchcraft, and this is a subject on which the author is an expert. A great deal of the so-called magic arises from pure fear and suggestion, but if that fails a sorcerer will put a tiny trained snake into a man's bed when he is asleep. The snake's bite is so small, the man does not feel it, and the snake returns to its owner. Most medicine-men have one of these snakes, and they carry it in a tube hidden in their mop of fuzzy hair: it

is an old Papuan custom. This particular one had been, when young, for a few months at a Mission School, but was discharged when it was found that he was tearing pages from the Bible to use as cigarette papers, this paper being especially suitable.

The author, in his outlook on life, is essentially a cosmopolitan, and does not pine for his beloved islands, but realizes that civilized life also has its adventure. As he says, colour and romance are to be found in London as well as in the South Seas, and life here calls for just as much courage, if of an altogether different kind, which has been proved by the bravery and heroism of the men and women of England in our Civil Defence.

If any reader wants a book to make him forget the war for a while, he cannot do better than to transport himself to the Island of Stopi and watch the unfolding of the story that Mr. McLaren has created there.

F. A. HORNIBROOK

Acid Drops

The organized campaign in favour of putting the schools under the almost complete control of the clergy is forging ahead. If it is successful it will owe much of its success to politicians who do not hesitate to subordinate principle to personal aims, and the desire to stand well with a section of the electorate, and to teachers who in so many cases betray little sense of the dignity and responsibility of their positions. The certain thing is that, if the teachers were as a body to speak out, the clergy would be halted successfully. As it is the "black army" can count on all those teachers who think that if they are Christians this justifies their forcing Christianity upon others, all who fear risking promotion, and to whom teaching is just a job of no greater importance than sweeping the streets. It is a pity that what should be regarded as the highest of occupations is so treated, but the fact is there.

We note, for example, in the correspondence that is going on in the press, that some teachers have protested that the religious instruction given in the State schools is excellent and quite Christian. We question this very much. But in this respect the clergy are in a sound position when they say that if religion is taught in the schools it should be seen to it that they who teach religion should be qualified to do so. If it is in the schools it should be taught by those who believe in it, for no honest person can teach something in which he, or she, does not believe with the same force as they who believe in what they are saying. And children are much quicker in seeing through insincerity and humbug than the majority of adults believe. But if religion is to be taught by those who understand it and believe in it, who so fitted for the task of supervision as the clergy? If the schools are to be converted into breeding pens for members of church and chapel, then we ought to expect dogmatic tests of the most stringent character.

But we suggest to honest and capable teachers that their policy should be, not to insist that children are leaving school well fitted to fall into the hands of the parsons, as in the bad old days sailors came ashore after a couple of years' absence with their pockets full of money, as prepared food for pimps, but that religion should have no place at all in the schools. The State has no more justification for teaching religion to the child than it has for forcing religion upon adults. Let teachers take a clear stand, and declare that it is not their business to ram religion into the heads of children, that they will not submit to be placed under parsonic rule, either directly or through the Minister of Education, and the whole position will be altered. And the teacher who is sensitive as to his own dignity, and of the responsibility of his task will have presented the nation with something worth having.

Meanwhile the B.B.C. gives us a sample of the education children will get as chapel and church wield stronger influence. The other day we were just in time to catch the last few moments of the children's hour. (Lately the children's hour has finished with a religious address.)

We caught some one telling the children to "thank God for St. Mark," because in the Gospel of St. Mark we are reading the account of the experience of Jesus *as he told it to Mark*. Now we question whether any responsible person would father such a tale, and certainly no adult would put such a picture before a gathering of educated adults. Honesty would either be silent on the matter, or the presumably young listeners would have been told some people think Mark was a companion of Jesus (He is really believed to be a follower of Peter) and let it go at that. The picture, as presented in the Children's Hour, of Jesus chatting about his experiences with Mark, who straightway wrote down a record, is a piece of impudent realism which can be frequently met where B.B.C. speakers on religion are concerned.

Leading Churchmen, and others (we suspect that among these others there are members of the Government) who are hoping to stampede the country so that the schools may be completely and compulsorily Christianized, are overlooking nothing that will help. Thus, the headmaster of Winchester College says that religious instruction is to "take the central place of honour in the school-day." Religious instruction "should not be squeezed out at the approach of an examination." The aim is plain, and there must be a considerable degree of understanding between clerical heads of schools and others—again including members of the Government—for them to make their aims and plans with so much frankness, even impudence. Again we ask, what is the National Union of Teachers doing in the matter? They could dominate the situation if they would.

The Bishop of Liverpool, Dr. David, says it is foolish to teach a child doctrine. He says we must create a preparatory stage on which the Churches may build. That seems to us to be, from the religious point of view, quite sound. Teach a child doctrine and it may jumble it up with all the fairy tales it reads, and God and his angels and the fight of God with Satan may take its place with fights between giants and gallant humans. But teach it to believe, to say "I believe," and, as our predecessor, G. W. Foote, used to say, rub that in, and the child will be prepared for believing anything the priest cares to force upon it. Belief is the preparatory stage that Dr. David longs for. It is the matrix ready for any sort of superstition that comes along. As the New Testament says, all things happen to them that believe. We agree with that. Where their own interests are concerned the Churches have never lacked wisdom. Even in the rebuilding of Churches which God ought to have protected, the priests have persuaded the Government to rebuild them free of contributions of any kind by the Churches themselves. And look at the type of humans who are turned into curates, priests, bishops and archbishops. What would most of them have been worth in the open market? Belief is a great thing.

It is announced (if we adopted the usual newspaper jargon, we should say "revealed" as indicating secret sources of information) that the usual Sunday night postscript is to be altered in character. Mr. Duff Cooper has advised (ordered?) the B.B.C. to drop controversial subjects, and to take "nonpolitical subjects of wide topical interest." Mr. Duff Cooper is to lead off with a talk on Joan of Arc. Well, we are sure that Mr. Duff Cooper's essay on historical matters will be very interesting—to school children who are unable to criticize—and to old ladies of both sexes who are incapable of it. But we venture to prophesy that to those who are acquainted with the literature connected with Joan of Arc published in recent years, Mr. Duff Cooper's talk will give much material for reflection—not very flattering to the speaker.

But to describe the subjects permitted as "non-controversial," is in itself a piece of dishonesty. Is there any subject worth talking about that is not controversial? Consider the time taken up by religion on Sunday? We do not mean the services, but the talks. How can they be described as non-controversial? Suppose we get addresses on health, on the value of certain food-stuffs for humans, on literature, aspects of scientific subjects, or on philosophical questions are not these all controversial?

There is no subject that one can discuss which, if it is to be of value, can avoid being controversial. We have not a very high opinion of Mr. Duff Cooper's intellectual quality, but we think the issue here is quite simple enough for him to appreciate. It would have been honest enough to have said "In future B.B.C. talks, particularly on Sundays, will boycott anything that is likely to incite listeners to exercise their critical powers. They must be of a kind that will soothe listeners to sleep. Probably many will take the hint and go to bed before the talk begins, feeling that they have no need for an opiate."

We again reiterate our advice frequently given. Speakers with self-respect should show their opinion of such methods of censorship by refusing to talk in such conditions. If their "fan-mail" is smaller in consequence, it will be far better in quality, and they will gain considerably in the opinion of the public. Nothing but a boycott by men of standing will bring freedom to the radio. The often-used expression that there are some very useful and interesting things that come over the "air" is an expression of the philosophy of fools. The B.B.C. opens its arms to such. Without them its policy could not continue.

We saw, the other day, an account of a Victory Thanksgiving at which God was thanked for what he had done. It had nothing in connexion with the war, even Christians—British Christians—could hardly, with a straight face thank God for what he has done up to now. This was thanking God for helping the members of the Lord's Day Observation Society to defeat the Government proposal to permit the opening of theatres on Sunday. The Society took the opportunity to ask for funds owing to the expense of getting God to stop Sunday Performances. The expenses were high owing to the "shoals of letters," and the number of telegrams sent—no, not to God, but to Members of Parliament.

That looks like giving the game away, or letting the cat out of the bag. Unless God, knowing the quality of our Members of Parliament inspired a sufficient number of people in different parts of the country—with expenses paid from headquarters—to send letters and telegrams to Members of Parliament which prevented a microscopic majority in a very small House throwing out the proposed exercise in freedom. But we are still puzzled. God need not have interfered to induce a large number of Members of Parliament from voting for or against anything that is likely to raise religious hostility in their constituency. One can always depend upon a number of them running away. We really do not see what God did. He didn't even frank the letters and telegrams, or inspire those who wrote to pay the cost out of their own pockets. God and his followers match each other, and the two combined shed little credit on the House of Commons.

According to the *New Statesman*, the Seville Radio has announced that workers can only qualify for an extra allowance of bread if they can produce a certificate that they have attended Mass. We wonder what our Ambassador, Sir Samuel Hoare, thinks of this?

The Bishop of Gambia wants a "limited number of experienced priests to build up more far-flung parishes in Africa." We like that word "far-flung." It carries with it the suggestion that these priests will be far, far away. The only draw-back is that while they will be flung far, so far as we are concerned, they will be very near other people. There is an old saying that one man's meat is another man's poison.

The Bishop wants English people to contribute to the to-be established parishes so that they may have "endowments." But the Government wants the people to subscribe for aeroplanes, and guns, etc., although when the "far flung" parishes are established the guns often follow as a matter of course.

Germany claims that out of 90,000,000 in the Reich, 48,000,000 are Roman Catholics. Well, that helps us to realize what a fine humanizing power is religion.

N.S.S. Annual Conference

OWING to the uncertainty created by war conditions it has been decided by the Executive of the National Secular Society, after consultation with the Branches of the Society, to hold the Annual Conference this year in London. The Agenda will consist of the necessary formal business—election of Officers, passing of accounts, etc., and so far as time permits, a general discussion of matters of interest to the Society. The meeting will be held, as usual, on Whit-Sunday, and the place of meeting is the Waldorf Hotel, Aldwich, London. Arrangements are also being made for a luncheon.

One of the uncertainties of the situation is the number of members who will attend from the Provinces and Scotland. We think that a fair number will be present, but, of course, all promises to attend must be accompanied with a "provided." We must hope for the best, and there is certain to be a number of London members who are within reasonable distance.

The Agenda is being confined to necessary business, but the item "General discussion" will permit other matters to be raised, although anything of a drastic character would be quite out of place in what is substantially an emergency meeting.

Fuller particulars will be given later.

CHAPMAN COHEN

President, N.S.S.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

"FREETHINKER" WAR DAMAGE FUND.—A. B. Stringer (India), £1 1s.; D. H. Kerr, 3s.; F. Wyse, 7s. 6d.

R. W. WILLIAMSON.—Thanks for cutting. It is some little time since we gave the excerpt from Heine on Germany. Yes, it was repeated in many papers, but the *Freethinker* has always been, to quote Lamb, damned good to steal from. But the main thing, after all, is for good things to go round.

T. Y.—Thanks for compliments. We owe a great deal to our energetic and painstaking business manager. In these trying times he is ready and willing to do anything to help out of difficulties, and we appreciate having so dependable a character at hand.

A. WILLIAMS.—We will deal with the subject shortly, in one of the *Pamphlets for the People*. This series, as you are probably aware aims at giving a bird's eye view of the Freethought position with regard to a number of different questions. We are glad to record that they are serving that purpose well.

S. R. GAINES.—Pleased to hear from you. We have made many friends in all parts of the world—most of them we have never met. We are very pleased indeed to rank you among them. Thanks for your opinion of this journal.

S. RAWSTON.—*The Unknown Life of Jesus Christ*, said to have been discovered by a Russian traveller in Tibet in 1887, was first published about 1895 in England, then placed on one side as an obvious fraud, and then revived by an American publisher in 1926. It is, of course, rubbish. You will find particulars of this and similar modern frauds in Professor E. J. Goodspeed's *Strange New Gospels*. We question whether any other religion has ever been so prolific as Christianity in producing so many deliberate forgeries.

F. E. RAYMOND.—Thanks for excerpt. Shall appear soon.

F. MORRIS.—There never was any agreement among Christians as to what Christianity meant. You will find even in the New Testament proofs that from the earliest times Christians were quarrelling about what Christianity meant. By the beginning of the fourth century there are known to have existed nearly a hundred different Christian sects. And, of course, we only know those that have been handed down. The only thing on which Christian sects—save one—were united was in damning all the rest of Christ's followers. We will write on the subject you suggest so soon as opportunity offer.

J. CLOSE.—Yes, Wallace Nelson is still alive, and considering his advanced age, we hear from an Australian correspondent, he is still well. The Editor is writing you on the other matter.

S. H.—Thanks. Shall appear soon.

T. SMITH.—Not good enough. You may not have £5, but you know what £5 means, and would recognize it when you saw it. Our query was "How does one look for something of which he knows nothing, and how does he recognize it when he comes across?"

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.

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.

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.

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

We see that attempts are being made to force men in the Home Guard to attend Church Parades. We are not quite sure whether this body is under army rule, but if it is we hope that all Freethinkers in the Home Forces will protest against being forced to attend something to which they have conscientious objections. In any case even military rules do not compel them to attend the religious service. They have a right to halt at the Church door. They cannot be compelled to take part in a religious service in which they do not believe. This war is one on behalf of freedom, that at least is asserted by those who lead. In that case they should consider the freedom of those over whom they are placed. Liberty is just as good in Britain as it is in Germany, and we should be at least as much concerned over it at home as abroad, and we should have at least as much of it as we wish the Germans to have. We shall be pleased to hear from Freethinkers in the Home Service. And above all if their attestation has by any means described them as religious they are entitled to have the mistake corrected, and to have themselves set down as they desire.

We believe the name of Mr. F. A. Ridley is well known to many of our readers as the author of a number of important works dealing with the Catholic and other churches in politics. The Freedom Press (Newbury Street, E.C.1), has published a new pamphlet by Mr. Ridley, *The Roman Church and the Modern Age*; it is outspoken, and tellingly temperate in its form. We warmly commend it to our readers. The price is three halfpence.

In a school in England, lessons were suspended whilst the funeral procession of one of their little comrades, a victim of the *blitz*, was passing the windows. The teacher told them to be quite orderly and respectful. "You remember," she said, "what a good little girl Mary was. Behave as she would have behaved." "Oh, teacher," came from one of the little girls, "If we are as good as Mary was, we may be bombed." This is authentic.

From the last issue of *The Rationalist* (New Zealand) that has reached us, we learn that an appeal was made in the *Melbourne Sun* recently, for books for the soldiers. Everything, it was said, would be welcome "except cookery books and religious works."

Mr. Cohen hopes, in the near future, to resume the issue of *Pamphlets for the People*. So much of his time has been taken up by other things since the war commenced that he has had no time to write new ones. This series has been very successful, and very useful. It aims at giving a brief, but thorough, exposition of modern Freethought. They are simply written without being dull, solid without being ponderous. Friends who desire to help might well lend a hand in their distribution.

La Mettrie (1709-1751)

"The much-maligned Materialist,"

J. M. Robertson.¹

"While in philosophy there have been elements and tendencies of all kinds, in science there has only been one tendency—that towards Materialism. The history of scientific discoveries is a history of Materialistic successes: for no scientific discovery has ever been made that is not based upon Materialism and mechanism."²

"A une époque où la science commençait à peine à s'émanciper de la métaphysique, La Mettrie pressentit quelques—unes des grandes découvertes physiologiques qui ont reçu, de nos jours, une éclatante confirmation.

"Une des qualités dominantes de La Mettrie fut une extrême hardiesse philosophique jointe à un réel courage; jamais il ne connut les compromis, jamais on n'obtint de lui la moindre rétractation; il brava toutes les persécutions, toutes les calomnies; ni la haine du clergé, ni les poursuites de ses confrères en médecine ne purent réussir à l'abattre, à le décourager un seul instant."

Nérée Quépal³: *Essai Sur La Mettrie—sa Vie et ses Œuvres*, 1873.

ALTHOUGH the brilliant, learned, audacious, versatile and witty La Mettrie achieved European reputation in his all-too-short lifetime, our extensive enquiries have proved, only too evidently, that his works are little known in the Freethought movement of our time.

His name appears in Pierre Sylvain Maréchal's rare and curious *Dictionnaire des Athées*, 1798, wherein he is designated "médecin et philosophe français," with a few quotations illustrative of his ideas. He is mentioned in Wheeler's *Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers*, 1889, with a brief appreciation of his principal works. McCabe in his *Biographical Dictionary of Modern Rationalists* gives an even shorter notice, but adds: "La Mettrie's works are of great ability, and the occasional scorn of them which one hears comes from people who have never seen them."

Having recently been reading James Parton's extremely able and appreciative *Life of Voltaire* (London: Sampson Low, 1881), we found many enlightening anecdotes and incidents recorded in that work concerning La Mettrie, which aroused our eager interest in him. We started to search for, acquired, and became acquainted with some of his works, and have had a rare good hunt for any information available about him.

Julien Offray de la Mettrie was born December 25, 1709 at St. Malo. His early education, commenced at the College of Coutances, was continued at the Jesuit College at Caen. Here he distinguished himself by such eager application to his studies, displaying such notable ardour and vivacity of intellect that he easily gained all the prizes. His father, a well-to-do merchant, intending him to be trained for the Catholic priesthood, then caused him to become a student at the College of Plessis to study a course of logic under the Abbé Cordier, a noted zealous Jansenist.

Young La Mettrie was at first intensely impressed by his master's lessons—his impulsive temperament responded enthusiastically to sectarian eloquence, and he went so far as to compose, at the age of 15, an Apologia for Jansenism, which, although never published, was very highly commended and esteemed by that party—the then dominant Calvinistic faction of the Catholic Church.

After this youthful ebullition he continued to study

¹ *A Short History of Morals*, p. 352. (London: Watts & Co., 1920).

² Hugh Elliot: *Modern Science and the Illusions of Professor Bergson*, 1912.

³ Anagram of René Paquet.

theology for about a year, when he realized he had had "enough with over measure" of it; he developed so thorough an aversion to it that he thereupon quit both the scene and the subject—indeed thereafter, throughout his life, he manifested an implacable hatred of theology.

Our young hopeful now sought his father's permission to become a medical student; he gained his point and entered the Collège d'Harcourt in 1725. His inclinations towards the healing profession were influenced and stimulated by his compatriot, the physician Hanault. His father readily consented to this change in his plans, being persuaded "que les remèdes d'un médecin médiocre rapporteraient plus que les absolutions d'un bon prêtre."⁴ The College was of great antiquity and wide renown. It was founded in 1280, and is now known as the Lycée St. Louis. Among pupils who afterwards became famous literary men, may be mentioned Chas St. Denis St. Everemond, P. Nicole, Boileau, Racine, Dacier, l'Abbé Prévost, Diderot,⁵ La Harpe, etc.; of these celebrities the first, second, sixth and seventh in our list, being avowed Freethinkers, are, like La Mettrie, named and quoted in Sylvain Maréchal's *Dictionnaire des Athées*, 1798.

La Mettrie applied himself assiduously to his studies, devoting much thought and time to his special subject, but also eagerly acquiring all Classical, historical and philosophical instruction available. He made such rapid progress, that while yet in his teens he obtained at Rheims the degree of Doctor, 1728.

He then started a practice in his native town, but after carrying it on for five years, he felt impelled by the urge for fuller knowledge and extended experiences, to make a move on. He was far too greatly gifted, too ambitious and vigorous to be satisfied to continue existing under such limitations. Accordingly he made up his mind to go in for a further and fuller course of study at Leyden, where, in 1733, he put himself under the tuition of the celebrated physician, Boerhaave, who was then at the summit of his fame. He was a voluminous author, enjoying a great reputation for medical knowledge and philosophical erudition. Accordingly, in 1734, young La Mettrie set out on his literary career. He translated Boerhaave's *Tractatus medicus de lue aphrodisiaca*; to this he added a work of his own: *Traité des maladies vénériennes*. These two volumes proved so successful as to procure for him *en même temps* instantaneous fame and a crowd of enemies among the medical profession. They were bitterly jealous of the daring young innovator's bold entrance into their exclusive domain—no doubt some of his envious antagonists foresaw he would be proving more than a match for them in the future if they could not completely overthrow him now. Anyway, he was vindictively attacked by many, but hurt by none; he became hardened however, and grew increasingly conscious of his own intellectual powers, realizing his ability not only to maintain his own ground, but to carry an attack through the enemy's territory and win the laurels of triumph, as will be seen later.

ELLA TWYNAM

(To be continued)

⁴ *Eloge de la Mettrie* par Frederic II, read at a public Session of the Berlin Academy by Darget, January 19, 1752.

⁵ As Denis Diderot (1713-1784) was four years younger than La Mettrie, the latter probably left the College before Diderot entered it. Anyway, many years later, Diderot, who was a fearless Freethinker, as unorthodox and outspoken as La Mettrie, went out of his way to belittle himself by writing abusively and most maliciously about him—whose works he should have appreciated, and whose memory he should have delighted to honour.

James and his Epistle

(Concluded from page 214)

THE "James" whom Paul in his *Galatians* names as the first of the three "pillars" in the church at Jerusalem is often referred to in *Acts* as if he were the head of that Church, and some primitive fathers credit him with this high position. One of these, Hegesippus, who wrote in the early part of the last quarter of the second century, declares that "with the apostles, James, brother of the Lord, took over the church." By his omission of the word "other" before the word "apostles," Hegesippus implies that James was not one of the apostolic band; and by reserving for him the nominative case he seems to give him pre-eminence. Besides this, Hegesippus declares that ever since the time of Christ, James had been called "the Righteous"; that he was holy from birth; that he neither drank wine, nor ate meat; that he never got his hair cut, or took a bath, or rubbed himself with oil, or wore anything but linen; that he alone had permission to enter the Holy Place [the Holy of Holies?]; and that he got knees as hard as a camel's by praying in the Temple for the people's forgiveness. He also says of James "in consequence of his exceeding great righteousness he was named the Righteous, and 'Oblias,' that is the Defence of the people, or Righteousness." This last expression has the meaning given by the apostle Paul, to wit, "the righteousness which is in the law." Philippians (iii. 6). Hegesippus himself took as his authorities "the law, the prophets, and the Lord." Hence his great respect for James, head of the Judaizing party in the apostolic age. He goes on to relate, at some length, how James was put to death by the Jews in a riotous way near the Temple for having boldly proclaimed the Messiahship of Jesus. This tragic event, he adds, took place shortly before Vespasian besieged the Jews.³ Here the reference is to the invasion of Palestine by the Romans, begun under Vespasian in A.D. 68, and ended by Titus, his son, who in the autumn of A.D. 70 took and utterly destroyed the city of Jerusalem.

Josephus in his *Antiquities* (xx. 9) says that, during the interregnum between the governors Festus and Albinus, certain persons charged with being transgressors of the law were stoned to death at Jerusalem upon the order of a council assembled by Ananus, the high priest. As the passage now stands only one of the condemned is specified, to wit, "James the brother of him that is called Christ." This clause is regarded as an interpolation; the rest of the passage is quite credible. The above interregnum occurred in A.D. 162, or very near that date. The account which Hegesippus gives about the habits of James the Just (as he is usually named), and the manner of his death, contains (especially in the latter case), several improbabilities, and some obvious fictions. Still, after a dim shadowy fashion, they portray the type of man introduced in *Acts* as one "James," a great authority among the Christians at Jerusalem; and in *Galatians*, as "James the Lord's brother," first of three "pillars" in that community. All that Hegesippus represents this James to have taught about Jesus is that he had been crucified, and was now in Heaven, but, as "the Son of Man, would return to earth on the clouds." Thus the Messiahship of Jesus, and not his redemptive work, is the thing taught. This agrees well with the Epistle of James, for therein it is said, "Be patient, therefore, until the coming of the Lord . . . for the coming of the Lord is at hand . . . behold the judge

standeth before the door." (v. 8-9.)⁴ Here the Greek word *parousia*, rendered by "coming," is the technical term used in the New Testament to describe Christ's Second Advent, whilst the function of judge was ascribed by the Jews to the Messiah.

As regards the manner in which James was the brother of Jesus there is some ambiguity. Matthew (xiii. 55), confirmed by Mark (vi. 3), says that, when Jesus, after having gained celebrity, revisited "his own country," and spake in the synagogue, the hearers were "astonished," and said, among other things, "Is not his mother called Mary? and his brothers, James, and Joseph, and Simon, and Judas?" For "Joseph," Mark has "Joses," the Greek form of "Joseph." Matthew (xxvii. 55-56), again confirmed by Mark (xv. 40) says that "Mary the mother of James and Joses" was one of the women who witnessed the Crucifixion of Jesus; whilst Mark (xvi. 1) adds that, along with two other women, "Mary, the mother of James" bought spices "wherewith to anoint the corpse of Jesus. Luke (xxiv. 10) says that "Mary the mother of James" was one of the women who reported to the disciples the Resurrection of Jesus. Common sense forbids the supposition that Mary, mother of Jesus was the Mary, mother of James and Joses, who, in the above passages, is said to have seen the Crucifixion, bought the spices, and brought the news of the Resurrection. John (xix. 25) says, "There were standing by the cross of Jesus, his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene." This is the exact rendering of the Greek Text, save for the fact that "wife" supplies a missing word which may be "daughter," but in either case the passage involves the anomaly that two sisters, living at the same time, had the same name. Still, John, who is a somewhat confused and careless writer, may have really intended to say that four women, not three, were then present, in which case he should have inserted the word *kai*, i.e., "and," between the words "sister" and "Mary." This point no one could fail to observe, and Dr. Orello Cone, regarding it, says:—

The opinion that four women instead of three are mentioned here has the support of the Syriac Version, and many of the highest authorities. (*Ency. Biblica*, col. 2319.)

Dr. Cone rightly concludes that this emendation of the original text removes the difficulty caused by the attribution of the name "Mary" to the two sisters, because it leaves unnamed the woman whom it describes as the sister of the mother of Jesus. But, admitting his conclusion, we are still faced by the fact that James and Joses whom, according to Matthew and Mark, the hearers of Jesus called his brothers, are elsewhere declared by the same evangelists to have been sons of a woman named Mary, whilst Mark, in the case of James, twice makes that declaration. All I can suggest is that Joseph, father of Jesus had two wives, one of these women bearing Jesus, and the other bearing James, Joses, Simon and Judas. If this were so, then Mary might easily have been the name of both these wives. John (vii. 5) says, "Even his brethren did not believe on him"; and there can be no doubt that they were among the "friends," who, according to Mark (iii. 21) desired to seize him, saying, "He is beside himself." This enmity reminds one of that shown towards Joseph by his ten brothers. Joseph's father, Jacob, was a polygamist, and Joseph's mother, Rachael, had only two sons, Joseph himself and Benjamin, Jacob's youngest son. His brethren envied and hated Joseph, but were glad to be reconciled to him when they found him in a good position. We do not find the brethren of Jesus numbered

⁴ This passage, and the one about the anointing of the sick, are the only occasions when the word "Lord," used without qualification, signifies in the present Epistle the Lord Jesus, not the Lord God. These two passages prove conclusively that the author possessed some form or other of Christianity.

³ The Memorials of Hegesippus is lost, but fragments survive in the Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius. (See especially ii. 23.) The Greek Text here used is that of Dindorf. Leipzig, 1890.

among his followers before the belief prevailed that he had survived death, and gone up into heaven, whence he would shortly return in power and glory to judge mankind, and to establish the Messianic kingdom. (*Acts i. 14.*) This is all that James has to tell us about Jesus in his Epistle. It is certain that even though the Resurrection never took place, the belief that it had taken place would be sufficient to explain the origin of the Christian Church. It seems to me by no means incredible that a visionary, such as Jesus is described to have been, might predict his own death and resurrection; and that after one or two of his more imaginative followers became convinced of having witnessed his apparition, many others would infallibly get the same conviction.

According to Paul (*1 Corinthians xv. 5-7*) Jesus had appeared to a great number of persons before appearing to James. Perhaps he had been difficult to convince; or may be he disliked being surpassed by his associates!

C. CLAYTON DOVE

P.S.—On page 200, col. 2, line 14, for "assures" read "accuses."

The Doctrine of Intention

WE have said before that a sacrament is an act performed by a priest, who by saying the correct pater brings the "divine element" (i.e., God) into the deed; obviously a most holy, marvellous and magical performance. And because it is so holy and marvellous, etc., the whole business must be done absolutely correctly—everything must be just so—or the divine element will not come and join in. Is it not unthinkable that the divine element would be a partner in anything that was not perfectly proper? Is not this obvious, axiomatic, what nobody can deny? Suppose, for instance, some impostor poses as a priest and performs a sacrament. His pater may be O.K., the people may have no idea he is a fake, they may all think a correct sacrament has been performed—but has God been fooled?—has God come down at the bidding of a fake priest? It is unthinkable, and so, God not having come down, there has been no sacrament. Or again: Suppose a priest has actually (but unknown to every other human being) become an Atheist. He goes on doing his job, and no human being may be aware of any difference. But God knows all about it; and is God mocked? No. God is not going to come down from heaven at the bidding of an Atheist. Therefore all the "sacraments" performed by that Atheist priest are no sacraments at all. There is no getting away from this position; the logic is inexorable. And though, so far, everything sounds very proper and unobjectionable, the situation that follows in practice, must be, to a papist, an infernal mess (though it would be a good thing if they could see that it is an excellent example of a logical reductio ad absurdum, proving that their axioms are false).

In practice there are at least three essentials to a genuine sacrament. (1) The priest must be quite properly a priest. All the formalities of his baptism, confirmation and ordination must have been carried out duly and truly. (2) He must be competent to perform correctly, e.g., he must not be so drunk that he cannot say the pater correctly; half drunk might pass muster, through exactly where the line is drawn is known, if at all, to the "divine element" only. (3) He must not only do the outward performance correctly he must believe in it with absolute correctness. The technical words for this are that he must have the correct and proper "intention."

Now the correct meaning of anything in the Church is what the Church itself says about it.

The priest must believe exactly as the Church says; he must not have any opinion differing or contradicting.

The official doctrines of the Papist Church were promulgated by the Council of Trent, and all Papists must look on that Council's teaching and doctrine as inspired, infallible, and absolutely correct. It put the Doctrine of Intention thus. "If one shall say that in ministers, whilst they make (or complete) and confer the sacraments, there is not required the intention of doing at least what the church does, let him be accursed." (Note the characteristic Papist kink of not saying a thing straightforwardly, and the equally Papist characteristic, fondness for cursing.)

It is obvious that with all these onerous conditions requiring to be fulfilled exactly and completely, there must be a large number of invalid sacraments. This in itself would lead to a good deal of doubt, but it would be insignificant compared to the consequential mischief, which is really tremendous. One invalid baptism may start an ever increasing snowball of invalid sacraments. Because a child is not validly baptized it is not on the list of possibles for heaven. In its teens it may be "confirmed"—but confirmation of an unbaptized person is invalid. In its twenties it may get "holy orders," i.e., be made a "priest"—but he will not be a valid priest because he has never been validly baptized. Every "sacrament" such an invalid "priest" performs will not be a valid sacrament (this will include all his sacraments of "holy" matrimony—they will not be valid, they will not be marriages). In his thirties or forties he may be ordained a "bishop," but because he is not baptized he will not be a real bishop. Still, as a supposed bishop he will ordain perhaps scores or hundreds of "priests," none of whom will be genuine, and their activities will lead to an ever widening stream of invalid sacraments. From generation to generation the mischief will grow. One false baptism 1500 years ago could be sufficient to cast a doubt on every "sacrament" in the church! But in every century there must have been hundreds, nay thousands, of invalid "baptisms."

Church chroniclers tell with gusto of various saints and missionaries numbering and baptizing converts by the thousand-a-day. Some chief or petty King would first be "converted," and then he would order his people to be "converted" and "baptized" en masse. The "saint" would have a crowd lined up and would sprinkle it enthusiastically—but would every one get his due portion of the holy water? Many would be unwilling converts and would deliberately dodge it. Later on they would find it would pay to go with the crowd and even join the new and delectable profession of priest. Who can doubt that among our Anglo-Saxon forefathers (e.g.) there would be many such invalid priests, beginners of a long trail of invalidity?

More serious still would be invalidity due to "lack of intention," "mistaken" intention, and deliberate "wrong intention." A big proportion of priests are, and have been, Atheists, unbelievers. Most middle-aged priests must be sadly disillusioned men. Many of them are soured. But very few throw up their jobs, for they are quite unfitted to compete in secular business affairs. They have gone on performing their work as a matter of (meaningless) routine. At the best they will perform sacraments with a lack of intention. But many of the soured ones will probably take a pleasure in having deliberately wrong intentions. This is no new thing. It is more than four hundred years since an Atheist Pope spoke mockingly of the "profitable fables" on

National Secular Society

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD MAY 4, 1941

The President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, in the chair. Minutes of previous meeting read and accepted. Financial Statement presented. New members were admitted to West London Branch and to the Parent Society. The Annual Conference will be held in the Waldorf Hotel, Aldwich, London, on Whit-Sunday, June 1. Conference details and a number of routine matters were dealt with, the next meeting of the Executive was fixed for Sunday, May 25, and the proceedings closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,
General Secretary

which ecclesiastics lived. It is well known that it was clerical vice and hypocrisy as openly and ribaldly displayed in Rome were a chief cause of Luther's becoming a reformer. "His quality of envoy from the Augustin monks of Germany brought Luther many invitations to meetings of distinguished ecclesiastics. One day he found himself seated with several prelates, when these showed themselves off to him in their true colours, as men of ribald manners and impious conversation . . . they related with laughter how in saying Mass they pronounced over the bread and wine in derision, "Panis es, et panis manebis, vinum es et vinum manebis." ("Bread thou art and bread thou shalt remain, wine thou art and wine thou shalt remain.")

"Then" (continued they), "we raise the ostentory and all the people worship." (D'Aubigne's History, Vol. I, p. 174.) All this is exactly what we might expect. It must have been happening all through the centuries, and never more likely than to-day. A conjuring trick ceases to be marvellous when we know how it is done. Priests know all about the hollow sham which is their Church and must have an unutterable contempt for the mugs and mutts who look on them as little tin gods. Not one priest in ten, at least of those over forty, must perform with the correct "intention."

What an anti-climax all this is to the Papists' hysterical boosting of their holy system. No priest, bishop, or pope, but what there is a doubt even of his chance for heaven (owing to his doubtful baptism) and of his "orders," which are his credentials for performing sacraments. There is not a sacrament performed in the Papist Church that is genuine beyond a peradventure. And as Papist marriages are sacraments, there is not a single Papist marriage but has a doubt on it. Not a single Papist married couple can be sure they are married or unsure that they are but man and concubine! not a single Papist family that can be sure of its sanctity.

Of course, if a Papist couple has been married in Great Britain under the conditions laid down by British law they have got a valid marriage contract. But from the point of view of their own Church the secular contract is naught and only an unavoidable concession to the force majeure of British law. From the point of view of their religion it is the sacrament alone that makes the marriage. And as regards this we emphatically reaffirm that there is not and cannot be any certainty in its genuineness. The sacrament of matrimony is indeed much less certain than is indicated by what we have already described. It is in fact such a matter of fantastic lunacy that it would take a long article to describe its instability, and insecurity, along with its horrible appendage, annulment. This latter, one of the most vicious things ever invented by priestcraft hangs like a Damocles' sword over the heads of every Papist couple.

C. R. BOYD FREEMAN

Obituary

CARL GRUNDY

THE remains of Carl Grundy were cremated at Golders Green Crematorium, on Thursday, May 1. After a brief illness death took place in his 77th year. He was one of the staunchest of Freethinkers, being a regular reader of the paper, a member of the N.S.S., keenly alive to the welfare of the movement, and living his Freethought principles in a domestic circle in which his wife and family held his views. A real humanitarian it could be said of him that the world was his country and mankind were his brethren. To his widow and surviving members of the family we offer sincere sympathy in their great loss.

At the Crematorium, before an assembly of members of the family, relatives and friends, a Secular Service was read by the General Secretary of the N.S.S., Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

ADAM YOUNGER

I REGRET to report the death of yet another of the old brigade of the Tyneside.

By the death of Adam Younger at the age of 66, after only a short illness, our cause has lost a life-long adherent, and Northumberland Freethought is poorer. Although he had had to work hard all his life, and literally earned his bread by the sweat of his brow, Adam Younger had a pronounced literary bent, and he rightly earned the reputation as a scholar, and an accomplished linguist. He had richly garnished a receptive mind by much reading from a well selected library. He was naturally of shy disposition, and this alone was the reason he had not occupied a much higher position in life than he did.

He was well respected by all in his locality, and his advice was much sought after, and valued.

A secular address was given at his graveside by John T. Brighton, before a large gathering of relatives and friends.—J.T.B.

JAMES ROBERT WHITE

WE regret to announce the death of James Robert White, of Upper Holloway, London. Mr. White was a Freethinker and a member of the N.S.S. over a period of many years, and was a fairly regular attendant at the indoor meetings of the North London Branch. He had been ailing for a long time, and it was due to the loving care and solicitude of his wife that he lived as long as he did. Mr. White was cremated at Golders Green, on Friday, May 2, a Secular Service being conducted by Mr. T. H. Elstob.—T.H.E.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON

OUTDOOR

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.0, Mr. T. H. Elstob. Parliament Hill Fields, 3.0, Mr. T. H. Elstob.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 7.30, Thursday, Mr. E. C. Saphin. 6.0, Sunday Mr. E. T. Bryant.

INDOOR

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, C.F.M. Joad, M.A., D.Lit.—"Education in the New World."

COUNTRY

OUTDOOR

KINGSTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place): 7.0, Mr. J. W. Barker, a lecture.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Mound): 7.30, Mr. F. Smithies—A Lecture.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Bigg Market): Friday, 7.30, Mr. J. T. Brighton—A Lecture.

CHESTER-LE-STREET (Bridge End): Saturday, 8.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton—A Lecture.

DARLINGTON (Market Steps): Sunday, 7.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"Privileges and Penalties."

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