

# THE FREETHINKER

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## VIEWES AND OPINIONS

### The Churches and the People

THE Bishop of Coventry, Dr. Neville Gorton, has two complaints to make. The first is that there are not enough people attending church. To that we may well reply that certainly for the past eight or nine hundred years there never has been enough people attending church. Even when a man might be punished for not attending divine service the congregations never satisfied the clergy. It is true that the absence from church of a large body of men and women does not prove that they are without belief in God and Christianity, but it does show, if one takes a number of other pertinent things into consideration, that the belief in religion is not of a very compulsive kind. Whether we take the period when the Roman Church was supreme, or later when Protestantism ruled the roost, the same feature is to be noted. People went to church with a growing unwillingness, and in very recent time (say, 60 or 70 years ago) one might also repeat the witticism—we think of Hazlitt—that men went to church whether to get a wife, to please a wife, or to capture somebody else's wife. Then, within our own time, there was a phase when the well-to-do encouraged churchgoing because it set a good example for the lower orders and kept them in order, while the poor often went to church because they were dependent on charity, and much of it came through the church, or was given under church-influence. Then came another stage—when the poor, whom Jesus had kindly promised should be always with us, awakened to the truth that whether rich or poor, educated or uneducated, we were all heirs of the ages, and had a social and moral right to reap some benefit from the society to which they belonged.

A consequence of this development has been that those interested were less anxious to support the Church; there developed a greater difficulty in manning the churches, and for some time the heads of the Church have been complaining of the difficulty in securing candidates for "Holy orders." But no one can reasonably expect that Church officials will be fed in these days, as were some of the Biblical characters, by God-directed birds bringing food. On the contrary, even an Atheist may have a strong opinion that if the clergy are really necessary they deserve a living wage from those who wish to see that the Churches should be maintained by those who believe in them. Over and over again the working clergy throw in the face of men the reasonable Biblical teaching that the labourer is worthy of his hire. With that we agree, always providing that the labourer is justified by results. An actor, an author, a painter, all of them are worthy of their pay provided the work done is worthy of payment. No one will dispute these propositions. But when the Bishop of Coventry, the Rev. Dr. Neville Gorton, broadens his claims and demands

financial support from the *general* public, as a duty owing to the Church, he seems to us to be going a little too far.

For example, a number of letters have been sent to the Bishop of Coventry complaining that he is not maintaining a very strong hold on the people. The Bishop says that people ask:—

"Why doesn't the Church do this or that? I would remind some of these people that they do not contribute one-twentieth of a packet of 'Players,' and the rank and file of Church people contribute only two packets towards their parson's upkeep."

We think the Bishop of Coventry mistakes the situation. He writes as though the difficulty of the Church in securing a larger number of clergy who can look after our souls is entirely a matter of cash, and if the country wants more clergymen to keep a watchful eye on the people more money must be found to employ more parsons. And that is simply misunderstanding the situation. There are large sums of money at the command of the Church—through the proper channels—and the total payments would provide enough for a larger staff if the money was more equally distributed. What the Bishop says in effect is: "Give us more money and we can have a larger staff, and with a sufficiently large staff we can get more people to attend church." But it is not the quantity of clergymen that is in question, but the quality. The Bishop is conveniently confusing the question of quality and quantity.

There is another and more important phase of the matter which the Bishop quite ignores. The Bishop writes as if the Church was wholly dependent upon the freewill gifts of its followers. That is most decidedly not the case. To begin with, the Church is, directly and indirectly, one of the greatest landowners in the country. It also has a very large income from mining royalties and the like, and to whatever extent these possessions have shrunk, the passing of them was on a purely business basis. The Church is none the poorer by the passing. It was bought out, just as an ordinary landowner is bought out. Millions of pounds come annually to the Church from investments and similar sources. Finally, there is the fact that all churches are free from the paying of rates and taxes. That alone is the equivalent of millions. It should also be stated here that all places of religion have the same release from payments of rates and taxes, and one need only consider the land values of the Churches in London to realise what a huge present this is from the State. Nor should it be forgotten that the rates from which the Churches are relieved are made good by others. Hospitals are also generally released from rates and taxes, but in their case the remittance is a favour; with the Churches it is a legal right.

The facts we have stated are enough to illustrate the rather misleading remarks by which the Bishop of Coventry covers over the shrinking hold of the Church on the people.

It is in line with the statements of some of our leading religious dignitaries that the Church owns nothing. That is what we may call a religious *truth*, and if a layman put forward the statement in a similar situation he would be called a liar. Technically, the Church is without wealth. That is true, and yet it remains a complete lie. The wealth of the Church is now under the control of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. This was formed by an Act of Parliament of just over 100 years ago. But here is a fine illustration of the fact that it was the grabbing character of our Christian dignitaries which brought the Commission into existence. Many of the lower orders of the clergy were shockingly paid; on the other hand, the upper divisions were raking in money with the moral carelessness of a modern monopoly in oil or some other commodity. Here are a few examples of the incomes received by the heads of the Church of England, which I take from that tremendous indictment "The Black Book" of 1831. (We are only concerned with the section which deals with the churches, although the "rake off" by our old nobility and new recruits to the inner social ring reads like a Chicago gangster record.) The two Archbishops (Canterbury and York) took between them £52,930; 24 Bishops shouldered the burden of £244,185. Deans, Archdeacons, etc., had a glorious time, shouldering the burdens of large incomes as a consolation for doing very little. Hundreds of "livings," with good salaries, had non-resident clergymen. Bishops took care to put their sons, relations and friends into "profitable" livings. There was an income to churches from tithes of between five and six million pounds; altogether the Established clergy had a nice rake-off of about ten millions. And meanwhile there were hundreds of curates and the like living on starvation wages, upheld mainly by the hope that by getting into the good graces of their "superiors" a better-paid job might become theirs. One ought to note in passing the fine achievement of the Bishop of Ely, whose son-in-law, sons and other relatives have comfortably paid jobs.

It was, then, the gross abuse by the clergy, their appetite for money grabbing that led to the establishment of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. Its purpose was to distribute more equally the wealth of the Church. It in no wise benefited the people. As a matter of fact, it was the removal of some of the most glaring wrongs inside the Church that prevented the abolition of a State Church. The clergy stuck to their privileges and pay with all the tenacity that an international monopoly clings to its huge dividends irrespective of the rights of the people as a whole.

Finally, the attempt to explain the growing religious weakness of the Church as due to shortness of income is glaringly false. There is only one serious ailment that can threaten an established religion; that is being found out. For centuries the Christian Church, as a whole, has been able to ward off, so far as multitudes are concerned, the full nature of the impact of scientific thinking on those primitive superstitions which masquerade as Christianity. But to the student of religion the lesson of the past four centuries is not lost. Dean Inge well put it that Christianity died with the establishment of the Copernican astronomy. That is true enough, but the fact was clearly seen only by the few. To the mass of people there took place what they chose to consider a purification of Christianity. And yet the process of disintegration is clear to those who can look deeply enough and who have the courage to look facts in the face. The

decline in strength of the Roman Catholic Church resulted in the main in the growth of a number of Protestant Churches which perpetuated the superstitions they thought they were purifying. But Protestantism led to Deism, Deism faded into Atheism, and a reconsideration of the history of these movements discloses the continuity of the process of disintegration. And on the strictly scientific side the rise of modern anthropology provided a complete and convincing account of the origin and development of religious ideas.

The story does not end here. The growth of science and its application to industry in all its phases involved a growing sense of the power of man over nature. What had hitherto been done blindly began to be done deliberately. The example set by modern Russia, setting aside the question of the value of the plan adopted, stands out as a demonstration of the degree to which the life of the human community may be transformed in almost the twinkling of an eye. Even the breeding of a type of character in Germany, distasteful as it is, yet drives home the lesson that man may shape his own destiny if he will. Man's destiny lies in his own hands. The era of man, educated, unconquerable and indestructible, is being established. It is our own fault if we do not make the best of our opportunity.

We suggested earlier that the attempt of the Bishop of Coventry to explain the failure of Christianity, as due to the shortness of preachers, is worse than being false; it is ridiculous. A wrong view may plant itself, and even grow with the passing of the years. But a thing that is made ridiculous in the eyes of the people is doomed.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## MAN AND HIS SIMIAN RELATIVES

THE intense interest invariably shown when we encounter our nearest kinsmen, the apes and monkeys, has a profound psychological basis. The eagerness with which crowds gather round the cages containing these creatures in zoological collections and the marked attention given to their activities clearly involve a recognition of their resemblance to ourselves.

Nor is simian resemblance to humanity merely physical. As Professor Julian Huxley, who has had ample means for studying anthropoid apes in the gardens in Regent's Park, justly observes: "We have but to watch a mother orang with her child, or a young chimpanzee at play to realise how deep the similarity of behaviour goes. The mother dandles her baby in her arms, kisses it, strokes its head; her gestures and the play of expression on her face have often a pathetic likeness to a human mother."

In some respects, the chimpanzee more closely resembles man than the gorilla, orang or gibbon, although all these tailless apes are constructed on an identical plan. Like ourselves, the chimpanzee has nails instead of the claws of cat or dog. This ape also possesses grasping hands with an opposable thumb and its organs of locomotion are adapted both for climbing and progression. The female chimpanzee experiences the menstrual flow and carries a single pair of breasts, and the period of gestation is like ours. Their large and deeply furrowed and convoluted brains which are far more highly evolved than those of nearly all lower mammalian forms, furnish chimpanzees with considerable mental power. In several other respects, these

and other manlike apes approximate to the structural and functional acquisitions of human kind.

The anatomy of the apes is a counterpart of man's. Not only is their general morphological structure identical with ourselves; it corresponds with it in every detail. Their grinding teeth suggest our own and their hands and features appear almost human. Also, to some extent the gorilla and chimpanzee differ from the orang and gibbon more than they do from man.

Long the erroneous idea prevailed that man was endowed with organs confined exclusively to himself, especially in the brain. Even Richard Owen asserted that the human brain contained a unique structure. But Darwin's watch-dog, the famous T. H. Huxley, exposed the falsity of Owen's assertion to the full satisfaction of all unbiased craniologists. "Man's brain and brain case," notes Huxley's grandson, Julian, "are proportionally larger; but as Elliot Smith has shown us, this increase is due to the enlargement of parts of the brain already present in the ape—the parts concerned primarily with the faculty of association—and no brain organs are to be found in man which are not also to be found in apes."

The bony protuberances over human eyes are smaller than those of apes; our noses and chins are more pronounced, while the great hairiness of our simian relatives, and the less hand-like form of human feet, are the most noteworthy modifications that exist. But even these differences are a mere matter of degree, as no fundamental structures have been transformed.

The visual organs of the simian group are practically identical with man's. The yellow spot in apes' eyes confers a capacity for stereoscopic vision and thus enlarges their ability to gain experience from the constantly varying appearances in the world around them. The sense of hearing in apes is also much more efficient than that of most other mammals and other organisms. "The range of sound," attest the authors of that comprehensive work, "The Science of Life," "which our ears permit us to hear and the delicacy with which we can discriminate between different tones are almost identical in ourselves and the apes, but the sound world to which the frog has access is limited and crude in comparison."

Inborn instincts such as man inherits, as well as his reflexes, are shared with his simian cousins. These animals are remarkably responsive to training, and profiting by experience is a notable feature in the chimpanzee. Other animals also gain by experience and the sagacity and adaptability of cats and dogs are familiar to every observant animal lover. The intelligence of horses and elephants is highly developed, but this seems exceeded by that of the ape.

Professor Koehler's experiments with apes produced many remarkable results. In one instance a chimpanzee, on its own initiative, fitted the end of one stick "into the hollow end of another in order to get at a banana which was out of reach of either stick by itself." This action obviously indicates a capacity for adapting means to ends. Innumerable animals doubtless learn through experience, but not one, including the tailed monkeys themselves, despite the most elaborate scientific tests, has so far yielded evidence of deliberate intention like that displayed by Koehler's chimpanzee.

Embryological investigation shows that the unborn chimpanzee is more human in appearance than it is after birth. In the words of a contemporary biologist: "The skull shape of a chimpanzee is much more human before birth; and even the characteristic ape foot is in the foetus much less like a hand and much more human than later, while even after birth the human baby's foot, with its intumed sole and eagerly prehensile toes, is charged with hints of a racial past passed in the trees."

Comparative anatomy and embryology prove man's near kinship with the higher apes. But man crowns the tree of life

largely owing to his possession of the power of speech and other means of communication denied to his poorer relatives. This priceless possession has enabled him to rise above all other mammals and served to direct his activities as a tool-using animal with its far reaching results.

Apart from other conclusive evidences of animal ancestry, the human body contains a curious medley of vestigial organs which testify in unmistakable terms to our relationship with lower forms of life. Indeed, it is authoritatively stated that "the private development of each one of us is an affidavit swearing to the evolutionary history of our race."

The distinguished anatomist, Wiedersheim detected the presence of 180 vestigial relics in the human organism. These dwindled structures are of extremely little, if any service to man although they represent the relics of organs which function in other species. Even our wisdom teeth are on the verge of becoming vestiges. They only emerge when we are adult and in many cases never cut the gums, while they are apt to induce painful inflammation in the gums themselves. Our body hair is superfluous; our abortive ear muscles are useless to us, if useful to other living forms. Darwin's point in the external ear and the fleshy vestige in the inner angle of our eyes are rudimentary. This third eyelid, however, is a serviceable appendage among mammals, including the domestic cat, but this structure—the nictitating membrane—has been reduced to a mere vestige both with ourselves and the apes and monkeys.

The tail of the human embryo is well developed and possesses "all the muscles for wagging it; later, as the tail fades into insignificance the muscles degenerate or are turned to other uses."

The gill arches, again, of the human embryo, so reminiscent of its far-off fishlike ancestors usually disappear, but sometimes their impress is preserved and grown people may be seen who are scarred by slits on the sides of the neck. The hairy covering of the unborn babe may also persist. Hence, notes Julian Huxley, "the dog-faced men and hairy women of our fairs and shows; or the embryonic tail forgets to shrink and a baby is born with a little pink tail like a sucking-pig's."

When in the distant past man's ancestors descended from the trees, we cannot with certainty locate his general habitat. Presumably, then as now, man occupied sites most convenient to him whether on the uplands, in the prairies or within the forest glades. That ancient man varied definitely in appearance his fossil remains prove. Many distinct varieties seem to have co-existed in pre-historic centuries, but all the most primitive types are now extinct. But men of our species—*Homo sapiens*—have left their skeletons in caves, and remains of modern man of high antiquity found in the Grimaldi caves represent two distinct types—the Cro-Magnon and the Grimaldi. These two types are, observes Huxley, "as widely different as the Red Indian is from the Negro of to-day."

Man became a more gregarious creature than the apes and monkeys, and that is one of the secrets of his success. The primitive family groups developed into tribal organisations and, from these, proceeded the social and industrial aggregates that formed the earliest civilised communities, and to the legacies of ancient Athens, Egypt and Rome, modern life is deeply indebted for many of its most cherished possessions.

T. F. PALMER.

## GODS AND THEIR MAKERS

### THE CHURCH'S FIGHT for the CHILD

By CHAPMAN COHEN

Price 2d. each.

Postage 1d. each.

## ACID DROPS

THE war draws to an end, although its end is not approaching quite as rapidly as it appeared to many a few weeks ago. Still, the utmost that Germany can hope for is to hang on in the hope that something in their favour may turn up. And when the war is over we shall have a fully staged thanksgiving to God—the Christian God—for having brought his people, that is, the British people, into safety. Russia and China will also share in the peace, but as they will not officially thank God—our God—for the peace, they will not appear officially in the celebrations. But there will be thousands of people in this country who will take part in a thanksgiving hullabaloo to God—our God, the Christian God—for bringing end to a war that has killed millions.

But suppose that any human being, or group of human beings, could have stopped the war occurring, is it likely that he, or they, would have said in effect: "We can stop this war occurring, but if we do we shall have little thanks for doing so. We will wait until the world runs red, till cities are demolished, and human nature is scarred, and justice is only a thin veil for hatred and brutality." What should we have thought of them? Should we have praised them for that love and kindness to us all that they could, but would not, give? When will people realise that prayer to God is only another form of reminding him of what he ought to have done when war appeared to be even likely? We did throw out one Prime Minister because he did not do what it was thought he ought to have done to make our victory certain. But if Mr. Chamberlain could be forgiven, it is on the grounds of his being foolish, or careless, or short-sighted. But God sees everything; he knows everything; can do anything; and still he permitted this World War to occur. And at the end of five years we shall have all the priesthood leading the people to thank God for winning the war, instead of passing a vote of censure on him for not preventing it.

God made man in his own image. Religiously, that should have guaranteed everything as being O.K. so far as the Christian religion went. But it did not. God's image very soon chummed up with Satan, and then he, or they, proceeded to find other gods, although where these new gods came from no one appears to know. But when they did arrive they seemed to get things pretty much their own way. That was failure or sheer bungling—number one. Then came blunder number two. In this case it was God's own followers who began to fall out as to what was the right way of worshipping God. To settle things once and for all, God sent his son to try and make things run smoothly. But this son had not been telling his tale for long before his followers began to quarrel as to what he meant. The one thing that this "Love one another" gang has always been noted for is their inability to agree as to what they ought to believe, and the bitterness of the hatred they displayed for each other.

The Roman Catholics will not say prayers in company with non-Catholic Christians. The Protestants will not worship alongside of those whom they used to describe as the "Scarlet Whore." And now we see that the Rev. G. Holborow, of Kettering, writes in his monthly magazine, and on behalf of a large number of brother preachers, that they cannot take part in a joint prayer orgy with Nonconformists. He says that to do so "does more harm than good to the cause of religion." They are a lovely crowd, taking all these preachers together. But we must admit their position is not an easy one. If all these sects worship together God will be wondering which are really his followers; and if they pray separately he will not be able to allot his favours to one gang without offending the other; and if he blesses them promiscuously people will conclude that it does not matter very much whether they sing their prayers or whistle them. If God had put his wishes in the hands of a competent newspaper writer all this confusion might have been avoided.

Says one of our religious papers: "One of the saddest and most menacing characteristics of our time is the decline of religious belief." Who is it that finds it sad, and what is it that is menaced? The people who shun Church are not sad. If one compares the

faces of a number of people off for a Sunday at the seaside and into the country, with a crowd leaving church or chapel after they have been making a glad noise unto the Lord, the balance of happiness appears to be on the side of the Sabbath-breakers. And the only people it appears to menace are the clergy, who find their occupation slipping from them. But think of the number of people who find their occupations menaced by the existence of an alert police force!

Rev. A. W. Harrison, writing in the "Methodist Recorder," says that the aim of the Government is to secure "for children the education their parents desire." Now that is simply not true, whatever be the kind of instruction given by a government, and it is particularly untrue when it is a case of satisfying a number of Christian sects. So far as religious teaching is concerned, and so far as that teaching is Christian, children will leave school not merely unacquainted with the history and meaning of Christianity, but they will be provided with an armour of prejudice that will stand in the way of their ever understanding Christianity, or any other religion. This fine-sounding language of Mr. Harrison is just nonsense.

The truth is that very few people can teach others, and very few people can learn for themselves without creating prejudice against many positions and creating a strong prejudice in favour of one. This is true of the best of men; but it is dangerously true of most people who are to any extent able to control the minds of those subject to them. Bias—that is, a leaning towards one sense or another—we all must have, it cannot be avoided. No one can study a subject without coming to some tentative conclusion. A complete absence of bias belongs to the typewriter; it has no place in the human make-up. But when we come to the actions of a government, whatever be its quality, or a church, whatever be its sectarian label, then we nearly always find that bias becomes prejudice, and prejudice inevitably misjudgment, and to a greater or lesser degree of sheer tyranny.

We really have no great dislike to a good well-rounded lie. That indicates a measure of wit and wisdom. But it really is very clumsy when the Rev. R. A. Mitchell, of Gateshead, writes in the "Evening Chronicle" recently, that: "Modern democracy sprang from the Christian religion," and that "the followers of Jesus went out to establish such an order in the political world." Certainly the followers of Jesus "went out," and certainly they wished to see others follow Jesus. Certainly also the Jesus deputies used a certain amount of force in order to make strangers "see the light." But, all the same, Mr. Mitchell is rather clumsy. He might have stated his claim in other terms.

A writer in the "Church Times," a clergyman, relates how he paid a visit to a dying man who told him that he didn't want any prayers as he did not believe in them. The visitor describes this summary as "intolerable rubbish." But after some days the "dying" man sent for the parson and expressed a desire for "Holy Communion." The dying man said he wished he had known a parson 15 years earlier. As a sample of the mentality of both the dying man and the priest, this helps us to understand how rapidly the Church is declining.

As most readers are aware, the war in Holland looks like leaving great parts of that unhappy country in dire need, as the Germans are destroying everything that could give the unlucky Dutch people food, water, gas, etc. To avert the "threatened catastrophe," Archbishop Griffin is advising the Dutch people to pray. In addition, he is sending them his "sympathy." Well, we in England know how prayers have helped us in the war. In general, a National Day of Prayer was followed by some terrible defeat, and the prayers now being offered to Almighty God have resulted in the most appalling weather in Italy and elsewhere, which has hampered our soldiers and in all probability lengthened the war by many months. Prayers will help the Dutch just as much as the special prayers of the Pope helped Warsaw.

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### TO CORRESPONDENTS

C. D.—Sorry, but restricted space forbids. Many thanks. Perhaps another time. You did not enclose your address.

J. PEARSON.—Almost any history of England will give you an account of the "Bill of Rights." It was framed towards the end of the seventeenth century and took the place of the existing Declaration of Rights.

F. G. REEVES.—Received with thanks. Will appear as early as possible.

L. B. H.—Far too lengthy for a letter, particularly when our space is so limited.

FOR "THE FREETHINKER."—E. Maud Simon, 3s.

C. THOMPSON.—Thanks for the papers; most useful.

*Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2-3, Farnival 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, 17s.; half-year, 8s. 6d.; three months, 4s. 4d.*

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### SUGAR PLUMS

WE have commented many times on the ridiculously lying campaign by the Churches on what they call "the moral landslide," which is, of course, set down to the credit of the growth in Freethought. This was one of the war-time cries and it was used as one of the reasons for handing the schools over to "Christian" control. In the circumstances, we can give a very hearty welcome to "The Moral Landslide: An Inquiry into the Behaviour of Modern Youth," by Mr. F. J. Corina, just issued by the Secular Society Limited. Mr. Corina is now well known to readers of this journal, and is building himself a deserved reputation as a writer and lecturer. His last effort should have a quick sale. Price 6d., postage 1d.

We think the following will interest many of our readers. It comes from an old reader of "The Freethinker," a Frenchman living in Deuil, who has not been able to get his copy of this journal. We refrain from giving his name:—

"I, as an old reader of 'The Freethinker,' am glad to inform you that I managed to go as good as possible through the struggle the Nazi occupation imposed on us. I most sincerely hope that your paper had not to suffer during the more than four years I could not hear anything from you, and I still more sincerely hope that the strain of war left yourself unhurt as well as your worthy staff. How often did I look during the long night through the pages of hidden numbers of 'The Freethinker,' and am still wondering how clearly you could foresee all that happened.

"Please renew my subscription to 'The Freethinker.' I will send the amount as soon as bank or post office accept forwarding money. I am really hungry to read you again."

The following extract from a letter, one of many which we receive from members of the Armed Forces, will also be of interest to our readers; it comes from a naval man:—

"I have just received four issues of 'The Freethinker,' and I can honestly say I have never looked forward so much to any reading material. I was looking forward very much to receiving them, and now that they have arrived they have fallen on fertile soil. I have already met several Secularists, and one desires to join the N.S.S. In the near future you should also be hearing from my brother in Italy, who also wants to join."

To-day (November 12), Mr. F. A. Hornibrook is giving an address before the Leicester Secular Society, at 75, Humberstone Gate, on "The Church in Politics." Mr. Hornibrook is a forcible speaker with something to say, and we expect a good meeting. The chair will be taken at 6.30 p.m. and there will be time for a vigorous discussion.

In the Mechanics' Institute, Bradford, today (November 12), Mr. R. H. Rosetti will speak for the local N.S.S. Branch on "Do We Live When We Die?" The meeting will be held in the Lecture Hall, doors open at 6 p.m., commence at 6.30 p.m. Admission is free, with some reserved seats at One Shilling each. The Bradford Branch is a very active one, with some good workers, and it deserves all the support that Freethinkers living in the area can give it.

What is the greatest human force with which we are acquainted? That is a question which one of our readers gives us to handle. Offhand, we are inclined to answer: Indifference. Of course, we may be told that indifference is a mere negative thing. We agree, but consider how much it helps to get the wrong thing done. Many centuries ago, thanks partly to the much-boasted Magna Charta, the barons were made the substantial rulers of the country, and their hold on the land has not yet been completely broken. About 150 years ago Thomas Paine propounded a scheme for helping the working people, along with others, which partly led to his being outlawed, and has now been revived by the Beveridge Plan and adopted by the Government in theory. Our educational system for many years lagged behind the Continent because the people were indifferent and the "upper" circles dreaded the effect of education on the "common people." And above all there is the question of religion—the Christian religion. At least nearly half the people do not really believe in it. Only a small percentage go to church. Anthropologists have traced the beginning of religion to the ignorance of our very primitive ancestors. And yet indifference permits the clergy to take a prominent place in our institutions; it permits also a bunch of bishops to have seats in our "upper" legislative chamber. Certainly indifference is both an evil and a very powerful thing.

In the beginning God made all living things, including man. Then he looked round at his handiwork and declared that "everything was very good." That is the most human story in the Bible. God's pleasure in seeing what he had made was on all fours with the pride that a man feels when he has finished a "job of work." It is also very human on God's part to find, when things settled down, that the main part of his work was turning out very bad; and again, like an angry genius, his work was turning out bad. Still very human is it to find that God lost his temper and cursed what he had intended to be his masterpiece, and all his offspring for ever and ever. It is all very, very human—the artist meaning to surprise the world and then smashing his work when it fails to come up to the mark. Poor, poor God! He has our sincere sympathy. Who would not have lost his temper in such a situation?

Hats off to Mr. Justice Charles. A boy, eleven years of age, threw a stone at another boy. He was arrested and charged with manslaughter. That brought him to the Durham assizes, presided over by Mr. Justice Charles, who said, "I cannot try a baby and I won't allow him to go into the dock." The Jury was instructed to return a verdict of "Not Guilty," the judge reminding him that throwing stones was a dangerous thing. But we would wager, in the dark, that the people who were responsible for sending the boy to the assizes were strong believers in teaching religion to the young.

## EVOLUTION: SOME OBJECTIONS AND REPLIES

(Concluded from page 412)

HAVING taken to a different medium—and survived—there is a tendency towards adaptation to the new conditions, and this is usually accompanied by degeneration of the now useless structures.<sup>5</sup> Fossil records are naturally largely incomplete, and the pamphleteer is careful to elude the instances where such evidence is extensive (e.g. evolution of horse, camel, elephant, etc.), but the study of embryology and early growth completely substantiates the evolutionary view and, indeed, is inexplicable from any other standpoint. The fact that seals (which are specially mentioned in the pamphlet) *teach* their young to swim, and that the pups are born covered with a whitish hair, is alone proof that they have evolved from a land-dwelling, hairy animal. In whales, too, we find vestiges of hair and hind limbs, while in one case, noted by C.E.M. Beadnell, the hind limbs were even visible externally. Then, in reference to flight, I can instance the Colugos or Flying Lemurs (which have no near affinity to the actual Lemurs) as representing “a stage through which the bats must have passed in their evolution.”<sup>6</sup> They are incapable of true flight, but are able to glide from the higher branches of one tree to the lower ones of another—truly an “intermediate” stage in the conquest of the air!

Objection number five is “the absence of any organ in a nascent state in any living or extinct animal.” To answer this adequately would involve us in detailed examinations (particularly of embryology) which are not possible here, for it must be understood that organic evolution has become extremely complex. Prof. William King Gregory has dealt with the evolution of the mouth, tongue, teeth, nose, eyes, etc., from very simple beginnings in “Our Face from Fish to Man,” to which the interested reader is referred. As Prof. Gregory points out, the “direct line of ascent” is not definitely known, but we can trace the general trend. The organs of hearing in air, for example, have their beginnings in the Amphibia, while the development of the eyes, the mouth, and the brain, can be traced from the earliest vertebrates. We need not stop at organs, for the whole skeletal system has unquestionably evolved from the elastic, cartilaginous rod known as the notochord, which is still present in the “lowest” vertebrates and in the embryonic stages of the “higher” ones.

So, to the seventh objection which considers that the gradual evolution of the spinnerets of spiders is impossible because they “would have been quite useless until fully developed.” The last statement is not correct, for even among living spiders, there are gradations both in the number of spinnerets and in the web-spinning capacities. Whether the spinnerets evolved “gradually” or not may be considered an open question, but that they *have* evolved is conclusively proved by embryonic evidence. They are known to be the remains of two abdominal segments, additional spinnerets (where present) being formed by splitting-off from pre-existing ones.

The eighth (and final) objection states that certain “instincts or habits” cannot have developed gradually, and the evolutionist is asked to describe “the possible transitional stages between a scrape in the ground and the nest of the (house) martin,” which is cup-shaped and attached to a vertical surface. It needs to be said, here, that evolution is not necessarily gradual. On the contrary, changes may sometimes be sudden, and this particularly applies to the question of habits. Faced with a new or unusual situation, an animal may alter its mode of existence—indeed, it must do so at times if it is to survive—and the only way that the evolutionist can attempt the description asked for above, is to indicate the great variety of nest-building habits among birds. Some species, like the guillemot,

usually nest on the bare rock or in a crevice, others use a simple hole in the sand, but on occasions these are lined with feathers, grass, etc. In this way true nest-building probably originated, and birds now utilise all kinds of conditions, usual and unusual. Furthermore, Dr. J. A. Loeser, in his fine work on “Animal Behaviour,” has shown that the nests are primarily places in which to rest, and as the house martin normally rests on a vertical—and not a horizontal—surface (because of the shortness and weakness of its legs) it is not really surprising that the nest should be attached to an upright structure. Under varying conditions, however, the same species of bird often builds a different sort of nest. Dr. Loeser says (page 41):—“There are countless examples of this kind. They all show that ‘irregular’ behaviour is the original kind . . . Any fixation of behaviour which may occur, any habit, is secondary, a stiffening of originally free behaviour, brought about by uniform circumstances.”

This discovery is once again in accordance with what the evolutionist would expect.

I think it will be seen, therefore, that the above objections are by no means “fatal” to organic evolution, as it is conceived by modern biology. The biologist is the first to admit that he cannot explain everything, but he is also justified in pointing out that he *can* explain a great deal—and that evolution is the key to it all! There may be differences of opinion as to how it takes place, but evolution itself is a definite fact observable in all animals and plants. If we take the snakes, for instance, we find indisputable evidence that they and the lizards have a common ancestry, while the development of the extremely specialised poison apparatus can be illustrated simply and briefly. Studying the family *Colubridae*, which includes the great majority of snakes, we can sub-divide into:

1. *Aglypha* (without poison fangs).
2. *Opisthoglypha* (with poison fangs at hinder end of jaw and solid teeth in front).
3. *Proteroglypha* (with poison fangs at the front of the mouth).

In a separate family, the *Viperidae*, the fangs have further developed, being longer and attached to movable bones, thereby permitting folding flat when the mouth is closed and erection for striking. We can also trace the evolution of the actual fangs from the slightly grooved stage to the complete enclosure of the channel as in a hypodermic syringe. Perhaps the anti-evolutionists will accept the simple grooved tooth as a “nascent” stage in this process!

The most important point, however, that has arisen during this short consideration of evolution, is the overthrow of the idea of immutability. Divisions into Kingdoms, phyla, classes, orders, and so on, are very helpful in many respects, but they can be misleading, unless we bear in mind the existence of gradations. Most people have heard of the primitive egg-laying mammals like the echidna and the platypus, which exhibit many reptilian characteristics; fewer are aware that gradation is the common feature of all life. Our divisions, therefore, require continuous sub-divisions, and can never be perfectly exact. This, I repeat, is a complete vindication of organic evolution.

It remains for me to say that—as Prof. T. H. Morgan insisted<sup>7</sup>—the study of evolution has been rescued from “the vague speculative methods of its immediate past” and has

<sup>5</sup> Here, I merely state the observed facts and am not concerned with determinants.

<sup>6</sup> “Natural History,” Edited by Dr. C. Tate Regan, page 842.

<sup>7</sup> “The Scientific Basis of Evolution,” pages 7 and 8.

"become sufficiently advanced to rest our case for its acceptance on the same scientific procedure that has led to the great advances in chemistry and physics." This is hardly consistent with the pamphlet's assertion that "the dead hand of Darwin presses heavily" on the "majority of biologists in the British Empire and the U.S.A.," nor is it compatible with the statement that "evolution has become a religion" with biologists.

C. McCALL.

### LAST WORDS

TO baffle its pursuers, the cuttle-fish clouds the water with an inky fluid.

In a flood of legal fancies, Mr. Corina artfully veils the question on which he was challenged—declaration or no declaration in the courts.

Instead of a witness repeating a formula like a puppet, I suggested that instruction regarding evidence should be given by a clerk. Suppose that such instruction were put in the form of a question: "Do you solemnly affirm, etc., etc.?" and the witness responded with a simple "Yes," how could this make any legal difference?

Yet Mr. Corina imagines that if an attestor is deprived of his bit of elocution, jurisprudence would be bedlamised.

Actions would be taken without cause, and presumably won without adducing evidence; writers and publishers would be cowed into silence; the "Freethinker" ruined by costs, and its Editor driven into the "workhouse."

Bradlaugh incurred penalties amounting to millions, but the "National Reformer" didn't cease publication on that account; and as workhouses have been replaced by social welfare hostels, there seems little cause for dismay.

I demur to "truth for truth's sake" being charged to my philosophy: it is a little too mystical. I prefer "truth for our sake," for if truth does not benefit mankind, there is no sense in science, and superstition triumphs.

But it is curious to find Mr. Corina and the hard-shelled Christian in the same gallery. Both believe the declaration magically turns a liar into a truth-teller. If that is proved, Mr. Corina's assertion that the Oath is degrading is disproved: the Oath is patently uplifting. I am not quite sure that there is such a thing as "Christian hypocrisy." There are Christians who are hypocrites, and there are unbelievers anxious to "get on," who readily become hypocrites because of the power of the Church in the social and economic spheres. These, and their name is legion, have brought about the seeming disaster to education, which after all may turn out disastrous for the Church.

I am not a trumpet-major in the Army of Liberation, but I have used a little pop-gun in behalf of the "best of causes" since goodness knows when, therefore, the gibe of sitting pretty with goo-goo eyes, while a few deathless heroes court the fires of Smithfield leaves my "what d'ye-call-'ems unwrung."

H. IRVING.

## Pamphlets for the People

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### CORRESPONDENCE

#### BYRON.

SIR,—Mr. Edgar Syers pursues his object remorselessly and relentlessly and with greater vigour than ever, but I do not intend to follow him further, except to remark that he has now upset the dustbin and strewn the contents all over the place. In writing of Byron, Mr. Syers follows the usual method of painting "the portrait of the most remarkable figure in the literature of the 19th century on the principle of putting in all the shadows and leaving out all the lights" (Ency. Britt.).—Yours, etc.,

S. GORDON HOGG.

#### "THE SPIRITS ARE ANNOYED."

SIR,—In fairness to "Psychic News," and its Editor, Mr. Maurice Barbanell, I ought to point out that the letter which I sent to Mr. Barbanell, and which appeared in "The Freethinker" under the above heading, was reproduced in "Psychic News" on October 28, together with a reply by Mr. Barbanell, the two contributions forming an article occupying almost a whole page. As the Spiritualist movement is at the moment faced with a fight for freedom of expression against the Witchcraft Laws, which are being applied to that movement in a penalising manner, while other forms of religion escape, it is only just to acknowledge that, as a Freethinker, I was allowed to express myself fully in a Spiritualist journal.—Yours, etc.,

F. J. CORINA.

#### ANTI-SEMITISM AND DOUGLAS REED.

SIR,—I now learn upon unimpeachable authority that the opinion expressed by Mr. Cotes is correct, and in apologising to him I can only say that, like one of Dickens' characters, "I wanted to know."—Yours, etc.,

T. D. SMITH.

### SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

#### LONDON—OUTDOOR

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Sunday, 12 noon: Mr. L. EBURY.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Hyde Park).—Sunday, 3 p.m.: Messrs. WOOD, PAGE and other speakers.

#### LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.): Sunday, 11.0, JOHN KATZ, B.A.—"An Outline of a Common Faith."

#### COUNTRY—INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Lecture Hall, Mechanic's Institute): 6.30 p.m., Mr. R. H. ROSETTI—"Do We Live When We Die?"

Glasgow Secular Society (25, Hillfoot Street, Dennistoun): Sunday, 3.0, Mr. E. LAWASL—"The Psychology of a Christian."

Leicester Secular Society (75, Humberstone Gate): Sunday, 6.30, Mr. F. A. HORNIBROOK—"The Church in Politics."

## DR. GRIFFIN'S RABBIT

WHEN the Christian churches require a stimulus (and they need one almost daily in these hard times), they follow the usual procedure of the more secular movements. They bring out the "big shots" for public exhibition in some form or other, in the hope that waning interest may be quickened, or audiences gained, by the power of big names.

But the difficulty about this method is that unless the movement concerned has something of general interest to offer to the public, even the big shots cannot help a great deal, and their efforts will reveal nothing more than an axe to grind, or a big blurb of balderdash for Biblical bunkum.

When the recent plan for social security was being given much prominence, and commanding public attention, it appears that Mamma Rome was a little apprehensive lest too much Roman Catholic interest should be manifested in the new proposals, at the expense of religious interest. As it is always dangerous for religious movements to allow social developments to take place without some attempt to influence them (people might learn that secular progress is possible without religion), the Archbishop of Westminster (Dr. Bernard Griffin) concocted a little Beveridge scheme of his own, in which he laid down eleven points aiming at providing "security of home life as the basis of the Christian social system."

That, of course, is so like an Archbishop. The patent fact that this country's social system has ceased to be Christian, except for the thinnest veneer of an ornamental character only, and is doing certainly no worse than in the days when the system was of a much more Christian nature, is completely ignored by the Archbishop of the Old Firm. He thinks it ought to be a "Christian social system," so he assumes that it is, and proceeds to lay down his social code, or security scheme.

But just as the Leopard cannot change its spots, neither can Dr. Griffin conceal his Catholicism. The shining head of the axe he seeks to grind peeps out from beneath his robes, and it becomes apparent that his "social security scheme" is nothing less than a Catholic survival scheme. And why not? you may ask. Certainly. Why not? A Catholic archbishop has as much right as anyone else to produce a rabbit from his hat. Agreed. On the sole condition that he admits that it is a Catholic rabbit, to be cooked and eaten by Catholics, and not impudently offered as a suitable diet for the 95 per cent. of people who have no taste for Catholic rabbit.

Let us now dissect Dr. Griffin's rabbit, to ascertain its nature. It is in eleven discrete parts. The first four parts, constituting the head, fore-legs, and chest, are suitably designed to disguise the rabbit so that innocent people may easily mistake it for any ordinary kind of rabbit. These parts consist of proposals so similar to the State social security proposals—housing, work, family wages, etc.—that they are merely gratuitous repetitions of the State scheme itself, and Dr. Griffin could have saved himself the trouble. But it is good disguise, and that's what counts when you are pulling a fast one.

Part five, however, begins to take on a familiar Catholic flavour by demanding "recognition of the rights of parents." This is probably the neck, and we will recall the same neck being used in connection with the Education Bill. "Recognition of rights of parent," in Catholic terminology, is an abbreviation which, fully translated, means, "recognition of the right of the priesthood to give orders to parents on such terms that parents will be able to obey those orders without conflicting with the secular law."

Parts six, seven and eight, ask for "home helps for mothers rather than day nurseries; medical attention in the home rather than away from it; closer co-operation between parents and

teachers." These are the body and digestive parts of the rabbit, of a distinctive Catholic nature in so far as they are designed to preserve the units of the family from adverse (non-Catholic) outside influences. The Catholic rabbit has a strong anxiety neurosis against mixing with non-Catholic rabbits, highly developed where its offspring are concerned. The very young rabbits at home, instead of at a nursery, by nursing sickness at home instead of at a hospital, and by mixing teachers and parents from the Catholic schools, this anxiety can be allayed.

When we reach part nine we are getting near the reproductive centre, for here "parental control over sex education" is demanded, followed by (ten) a "campaign against divorce and contraception." These are essential parts of the anatomy of any Catholic rabbit, and stamp its ancestral origin clearly and unmistakably. But they are parts that do not make such a rabbit suitable as a standard for the make up of the rest of the community. I need not labour the point about sex-education. I have dealt with it fully in my book, "We Are Sixteen," and I would remark here that parents, on the whole, are simply not capable of controlling sex-education, if for no other reason than that people cannot sensibly control something they do not themselves understand, or against which they are inhibited. But the priests could control it, of course, in locum-tenens!

A campaign against divorce and contraception sounds a grand phrase in the mouth of a Catholic archbishop; but how utterly remote and medieval it sounds to modern and sensible people, looking for a real social security scheme.

Finally, Dr. Griffin's rabbit has a characteristic that is often attributed to the wasp—the sting is in the tail. For number eleven, his final point, demands—what? I suppose you have guessed already. "Religion in the home," of course. The climax of the archbishop's "social security scheme" reminds one of those publicity films, where one is led gently up the garden path, viewing its herbaceous borders and the generally disarming scenery, only to find at the end a huge placard, suddenly coming into view, and proclaiming the virtues of So-and-so's Soap.

Dr. Griffin may believe that the formula for rounding off a social security scheme is "religion in the home." Religion, to him, means the Catholic brand, of course, and in connection with his little scheme I dare say he is right.

But in connection with a real social security scheme I prefer to think that a mental purgative is indicated.

F. J. CORINA.

### ADVICE TO MY SON

When you are a man  
They will prate to you of liberty . . .  
That will mean  
Someone they want you to kill.

When you are a man  
They will tell you of your duty . . .  
That will mean  
Something they wish to steal from you.

When you are a man  
They will argue about morals . . .  
That will mean  
You are not expected to be human.

When you are a man  
They will preach to you of God . . .  
That will mean  
They want to keep you in subjection.

—JOHN ROWLAND.