

# THE FREETHINKER

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Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

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## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

(Concluded from last week.)

### The Folly of Racehood

ENOUGH was said last week to completely discredit the use of "race" when dealing with the development of man. And it is not out of place to note that the greatest burst of "racism" came just before the establishment of the hypothesis of evolution. So far as the existence of an "Aryan Race" is concerned (it was upon this that the pseudo-science of Nazism was based) that owed its introduction in this country to the misunderstood activities of a very famous Oxford don, Professor Max Muller, whose books we read in our youth with profit and pleasure. But Muller was emphatic that the sole use of an hypothetical "Aryan Race" was to smooth out certain linguistic difficulties. In good round terms, he said that "an ethnologist who speaks of Aryan Race, Aryan blood, Aryan eyes and hair, is as great a sinner as a linguist who speaks of a dolicho-cephalic dictionary or a brachy-cephalic grammar." What Professor Muller would have said of the fantastic "British or German Race," the "Latin Race," etc., we can only surmise. Probably the most daring of this string of absurdities is the "British Race," for if there is one body of people who can reckon their lineage from all sorts of mixtures, it is the British people. Their good fortune lies in the fact that the impact of other peoples has been in numbers not too large, and in periods that permitted local national digestion. We see the same process going on in the U.S.A.

I think we may be excused if we interject a memory which has only a remote relation to the subject in hand. Professor Muller translated a series of books dealing with Indian and allied Eastern religions, and brought out rather strikingly the likeness they bore to the Christian superstition. One Christian-critic was rash enough to say that if Muller had given a literal translation of the writings connected with sex and the sacred books of the East, many of his readers and admirers would have been shocked by the "sacred books of the East being associated with the Christian Bible." Muller pleaded guilty, but added that if the translators of the Bible had been equally frank with their material, every Christian would have been shocked. If my memory serves, Muller gave some specimens, and his critic dried up in a hurry. Our priests know when to retreat.

### The Rise of Man

It is some kind of an apology for those who talked so confidently about "race" that they did so before the theory of evolution was firmly established and the nature of human development was understood. There is also some warranty for talking about race when mere animal life is in question, for then we are dealing with differences that

are biological in fact. Breeders depend upon the repetitive quality of the animals in hand. But it is a slow progress, that has always a biological foundation. Of course, the origin of the human race has for its basis a gregarious group of animals, and is, so far, the forerunner of the "human race." But in proportion to the development of the true human type, biological importance weakens, and so far as human culture is concerned, fades away. It is a case where quantity gives precedence to quality; a situation where the former is lost in the latter. The description that exhausts itself in the animal is not adequate to describe the nature and quality of the human.

Those who wish to follow the matter in greater detail will find much that is helpful in J. M. Baldwin's "Development and Evolution," published in 1902. But the distinction was first clearly stated by George Henry Lewes—one of the most brilliant minds of his day—as far back as 1879 in his unfinished "Study of Psychology." He pointed out that while it is quite true that man had an origin in some gregarious group of animals, the difference between animal and human is sufficiently great to create a difference in kind. Space will permit only the shortest of citations, but I wish to be free from the practice of many of our leading philosophers who have "borrowed" plentifully from Lewes without the slightest acknowledgment. Lewes said, in describing the difference in kind between the animal and the human:—

"The distinguishing character of human psychology is that to the great factors, organism, medium and heredity, which is common with animal psychology; it adds a fourth, namely, the relation to a social medium, with its product—the general mind."

That really does give us the key to the situation. Man has the first three qualities, common to the animal world, but he also has what one may call the master quality, a social medium, which no animal possesses. Imitation, common with some animals, will not do. Some animals may be taught to perform tricks, to mimic movements, but the capacity for doing these tricks dies with it. It is at its best exaggerated mimicry. As Lewes says:—

"The mental products (of animals) are functions of individual organisms; the product 'mind' is more than an individual product. . . . It is at once individual and social. . . . Each man speaks . . . in virtue of his social need of communication. . . . What his tribe speaks he repeats, but he does not simply echo these words, he re-thinks them. Further, the experiences of each individual come and go, leaving behind a certain residual store. . . . By means of language the individual shares in the general fund, which thus becomes for him an impersonal objective influence. . . . Men living in groups co-operated like the organs of an organism. . . . Each generation is born into the social



medium and has to adapt itself to the established forms. . . . A nation, a tribe, is the medium of the individual mind, as a sea, a river or a pond is the medium of a fish."

A writer of later date, L. Gumplowicz, repeats Lewes in more concrete terms:—

"It is not man himself who thinks, but his social community. . . . The influence of environment on the human mind has always been recognised by psychologists and philosophers, but it has been considered a secondary factor. On the contrary, the social medium which the child enters at birth . . . is fundamental."

Professor McDougal, in his "Social Psychology," says that if for a period of about half a century

every child born to English parents was at once exchanged (by the power of a magician's wand) for an infant of the French or other European nation, soon after the close of this period the English nation would be composed of individuals of French extraction, and the French of individuals of English extraction. It is, I think, clear that in spite of this complete change of innate characters between the two nations, there would be but little immediate change of national characteristics. The French people would still speak French, and the English people would still speak English, with all the local diversities to which we are accustomed and without perceptible changes of pronunciation. The religion of the French would still be predominantly Roman Catholic and the English people would still present the same diversity of Protestant creeds. The course of political institutions would have suffered no profound change, the customs and habits of the two peoples would exhibit such changes as might be attributed to the lapse of time . . . and we would go further and assert that the same would hold good if a similar exchange of infants were effected between the English and any other closely allied nation.

We have already pointed out that if there is one mixed body of people anywhere in the whole continent of Europe it is this country. We have for nearly 2,000 years had influxes of peoples from all parts of Europe, and so far as mere outward physical signs are concerned, the marks may be traced. But what some of these pseudo-scientists are fond of calling the French, German or English Race do not show fixed differences. Even on the Throne we have had for Kings or Queens, Danes, Normans, Welsh, Scotch, French, Dutch, German, and others, but they have not managed to alter the distinctiveness of the English people.

We may wind up by saying that in the animal world we have a slow succession of changes that are mere repetitions; but with the human it is not at all the accession of changes that are, so to speak, registered in the individual; it is the *social* inheritance of the group, every member of which takes from the common stock all that his capacity warrants his having—that is of importance. As Lewes said, and as many have said after him without acknowledging the source of their enlightenment, it is the social medium which determines the form that the group shall take.

I have space only for one more important consideration, and the first man, so far as my memory goes, to point out its significance was an American disciple of Herbert Spencer,

Professor John Fiske, in 1874. Fiske was the first to develop the significance of the relative lengthening of childhood. The human baby is the most helpless animal born. It is more dependent on its parents than any other animal, and is helpless for a longer period than any other living thing. But that lengthening of childhood contained the secret of the greatness of the human race. In the case of all other living things, each, so to speak, starts the race for life from the same starting-point, runs its course, and clears the way for a repetition of the line followed by its predecessors. (One has to qualify this to the extent of allowing the birth of "sports," but the principle holds good.) The human does not start from where its parents did. It commences where they left off. This residual factor plays its part in all successive generations. Accumulation follows accumulation. What is an unanswerable problem to one generation becomes a commonplace to those who follow. Evolution, in the case of man, lays stress upon the social heritage of mankind. Colour and stature are of no consequence. It is the Treasury that is bequeathed to every generation that is important. The "Royal Race," the long line of aristocrats, are of no value whatever. Nature does not measure greatness by these things. It is the heritage and the use made of it that tells.

One other conclusion of the greatest importance must be stated. It is worthy of a separate article, but must be condensed to a few words. Human progress moves along the lines of an accumulated heritage. The child is born the weakest of all animals, and is dependent upon the heritage that has been secured. Man takes what he can from the stored-up riches that the past has provided. From the weakest thing born he becomes the greatest of all. His progress is socially cumulative.

I must stop here, although I feel that I ought to add at least two more articles. For surely the understanding of what has been said is vital to a right understanding of man's nature, and with none is the want of enlightenment more pronounced than among those who so loudly declare they are the nation's leaders.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## MR. SHAW IS BEWILDERED!

AFTER almost ninety years of life in which to skip about from place to place on the fun-fair disc of philosophic farrago, or to piece up the ends of scientific and personal experience, or to rummage among the rusting remnants of religion, our lovable leg-puller belatedly finds himself faced with the question, "What is My Religious Faith?"—and is quite unable to answer.

He is unable to answer, so far as I can make out, for the simple reason that he hasn't got a religious faith, but will not say so in plain and understandable language. This is not like our usual Shaw, whose meanings as a rule are far from being obscure. Consequently, I am led to consider the possibility that Bernard Shaw's biggest leg-pull is being perpetrated in this matter of religious faith, wherewith he hopes to keep posterity guessing and discussing, and perhaps even quarrelling, about Bernard Shaw in those years to come when it won't matter a tinker's cuss anyhow what his religious faith may or may not have been.

If this really be the case it is a pity, for much that is valuable in Shaw may be lost to posterity if her tongue is set



wagging, and her typewriter clicking, about the Fabian's fickle faith, while his solid contributions to human thought are set aside and forgotten in the heat of a controversy of a type that wastes a lot of time and gets us nowhere. It is perfectly clear that Shaw's "religious faith" is Shavianism, despite his disarming talk of recent years, in which he has raised hopes in various directions of a Joadistic apostasy in which there might be a place for God.

In the "Rationalist Annual" for 1945, Shaw repeats the trick of making people guess. He asks, but does not answer, the question, "What is My Religious Faith?" in an article bearing that title. True, he states at the end that, "I set myself down as a Creative Evolutionist. But at that I must leave it, being too old a dog to pick up new tricks."

Or, possibly, too old a dog to commit himself on a question that has a survival value in the realm of literary immortality. For to describe oneself as a Creative Evolutionist, even using capital letters, does not answer the question. It is not made clear by Shaw whether a Creative Evolutionist is inspired by religious faith, or by irreligious scepticism, or by a bad mixture of pure science and plain ignorance. No doubt the wily Bernard smiled puckishly behind his beard as he wrote those last few words, realising the vast uncertainty that lay in their seeming definiteness, and the potential controversy in their meaning.

Indeed, throughout his article, Shaw seems to lay out the arena and prepare the auditorium for a first-class all-in religious wrestling contest, to be held at some future date between suitors whom he deliberately names, partly embraces, then rejects. These range from the Atheist—his first love after untying the apron strings of his mother creed of Irish Protestantism—along a range of fickle flirtations and "might-have-beens," all, in turn, being cynically jilted, yet left with just a ray of hope. He even leaves it open to the casuist to put in a claim for Mamma Rome which might seem valid upon Shaw's affections, while at the other extreme he cattily snaps at Madame Science.

One or the other of two explanations seems to fit the case. The first I have suggested—that Shaw wants to keep them guessing. The second is that probably G. B. S. "Dunno where he are." But one thing is plain to me, no matter which explanation may be correct. If Shaw himself does not know where he is on the subject at nearly ninety we ought not to waste further time seeking guidance from this uncertain patriarch; and if he is setting a time bomb with a fuse stretching into the future we should clip the smouldering wick at this end for Shaw's sake and for our own sakes. G. B. S. would not be the first self-centred genius to perpetuate his memory by a subtle trail of controversial confusion, but we should refuse to follow his path of metaphysical muddlement, for he has better things than a mere "barney" by which to be remembered, though he may himself have overlooked these in his philosophic oscillations.

For my part, I don't care a packet of pins whether Shaw has or has not a religious faith. It could make no difference to his contributions to secular thought; nor could it make any difference to the Materialist or Freethought conceptions. If Shaw had a religious faith it could no more affect the secular truths he has taught than could Sir Isaac Newton's religious faith affect his scientific discoveries, once perceived and expressed.

But when G. B. S. makes public statements concerning the movements and sects that have produced his condition of philosophic instability, there seems greater need for exactitude concerning matters of fact. In the course of his article he devotes a long paragraph to the yarn he has previously told concerning his alleged choice as a possible candidate for the Presidency of the National Secular Society. This story has already been dealt with and repudiated by Chapman Cohen in his "Essays in Freethinking" (fourth series) and in "Almost an Autobiography," yet, like a death-bed-repentance-tale, it comes back in full bloom, conceited and unashamed.

This time, however, it hardly calls for Mr. Cohen to correct the recollections of G. B. S., for, like so many wish-fathered stories, it ultimately reveals its inaccuracy by its own inconsistency. In 1929, in "The Sunday Express," Shaw told the story as follows:—

"When its most famous President, Charles Bradlaugh, died, it (the N.S.S.) was casting about for an alternative successor to G. W. Foote, with whom some of its leading members had quarrelled. I was invited to address it on the subject of Progress in Freethought. I complied; and my lecture threw the society into convulsions . . . I was not offered the vacant Presidentship."

Even if this story were accurate I could well understand the objection of the N.S.S. to G. B. S. if his ideas on religious faith were no clearer than they are to-day. But compare the 1929 story with the version in his 1945 "Rationalist Annual" article.

"When G. W. Foote became insolvent and his petition in bankruptcy raised the question of who was to succeed him if he had to resign his Presidency of the National Secular Society, some of the members, headed by George Standing, placed me on a list of possibles to be invited to address the society and be 'vetted' as to their eligibility. My subsequent career has proved that I should not have been their worst choice."

Shaw's modest presumption that he could have done better for the movement than G. W. Foote and Chapman Cohen, based on the fallacy of his "subsequent career," entirely ignores the patent fact that a man who does well for himself rarely does well for an unpopular movement. Shaw's personal success is the very antithesis of the sort of success which, in such a movement, usually calls for deep personal and financial sacrifice, and I feel certain that Shaw would have been the last man to have submerged "G. B. S." for "N. S. S." Besides, there is the important fact Shaw was not a member of the N.S.S., and therefore was not eligible for election. Like many of those who love to pull the legs of others, Mr. Shaw's own legs were evidently far from being un-pullable. The demand for Foote to resign never existed. The marvel is that any Freethought leaders ever have survived without getting into financial difficulties.

The fact, however, that stands out most clearly in Shaw's own accounts of his "invitation" is that he is not even consistent about the occasion. One can hardly believe that even George Bernard Shaw would so vaguely remember an invitation to be considered as a successor to Charles Bradlaugh and that he would later describe it as an invitation to succeed G. W. Foote. But, as I have said, the whole business has been effectively dealt with by Chapman Cohen, and the full story may be read in "Essays in Freethinking."

For many reasons that volume is one that Freethinkers should keep on their bookshelves.

My object in dealing with the matter here is to try to clear the air for those younger Freethinkers who, wonderingly reading Shaw's confessions of faith, or lack of faith, may be misled into thinking that one so doubtful of the way had ever been asked to lead the way.

Besides, it is as well that posterity should have one myth fewer to contend with concerning Bernard, who is bewildered.

F. J. CORINA.

## Pamphlets for the People

By CHAPMAN COHEN

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## ACID DROPS

WHENEVER Lord Elton drops into religion, one knows before he speaks what he will say, how he will say it, and can estimate what it will look like when it appears in print. Thus, speaking at a meeting of the Church of England Men's Society he said that he has been trying to find out what was the cause of so few people coming to Church. But that is, of course, not what he meant. Everyone knows why people attend Church—habit, simplicity of mind, a defective education, because it pays to attend Church, to set an example to others and so forth. Really the problem before Lord Elton is: "Why have people given up going to Church?" but if that course was adopted there would be the need of dealing with the growth of education, the better understanding of the origin of religious ideas, etc., etc., and that would mean opening the eyes of people who are at present blind to the warrantable change of opinion that has taken place. But that is not Lord Elton's aim. He prefers the character of a half educated parson who is not too scrupulous in what he says. But the old saying that one cannot fool all the people all the time seems to be the answer to the question he raises. Probably he knows that it is the answer.

The Bishop of Birmingham is, or pretends to be, very sanguine of the future of Christianity. He admits that the "old religious certainties have disappeared to a degree which though it ought not to astonish . . . was disquieting." But he thinks, or says, "the old pieties will gradually reassert their strength." One could not expect a Bishop to say less, and many of them have not the courage or the intelligence to say as much. But, if he said all he thinks and fears, he knows that the old religion cannot return. For what the Bishop is observing is not a change of religious creed, but the rejection of the religious idea. A man may wander from church to church because he does not like the building, or the parson, or because certain religious statements are not in accord with the fact. But the revolt is too widespread to-day. It strikes at the very roots of religion; and as we have often said, one cannot un-pull a man's nose. Once pulled it remains pulled. Once the lie of established religion is seen by a man religion is dead beyond the possibility of a resurrection.

Something of the same thing might be said in reply to the Bishop of Liverpool. This gentleman gloats over the reintroduction of definite religion—his religion—in the school. He adds that while the Education Bill gave more than the Churches expected to get, yet there is more to be gained, and he adds: "We should implement the Act with all the power we have." That is what may be expected, but it is not certain to come off. In fact it would never have come were it not that the Education racket was one move in the direction of the Tory Party winning another election. As we said long ago, the move of the Government was one of the meanest and the most backward step that has occurred for many years. The fact should not be hidden because some concessions are granted. And after all, the scandal of the public schools as closed institutions for ensuring the appointment to office of the ruling class remains untouched. The succession of the "Duff Coopers" is secured—for the moment.

Dr. Chavasse, Bishop of Rochester, addressing a very large gathering, assured his audience that "God himself was not merely looking on," concerning this war. Maybe not, and if there is a god to look on, then, he is markedly inclined to help the Germans, although for decency's sake he does, now and again, do a little to help our side. Consider how often the weather has been against the Allies, and at the critical moment when clear sky was essential our airmen are tied to the ground, and we get terrible rains, the worst for many years; which has helped the Germans in their retreat and which has meant the deaths of multitudes of civilians. It is not that God was not asked to do something. He has been talked to, sung to, moaned to, lied to, and promised all the glory when success comes. But he goes on steadily helping the Germans in their most critical moments. Of course, God is on our side. We have the Prime Minister's word for that. But so is Franco on the side of the Allies—and in the same style as Dr. Chavasse's deity.

Dr. Chavasse looks back enviously to the time when "England's moral standard was professedly Christian." We also can look back to the time when England was definitely and avowedly ruled by professed Christians. And we recall the vile conditions in which the people of England lived. The chimney sweeping boys of ten and eleven years of age, who were forced to crawl up chimneys to clean them and were often choked in the process, of women working nearly naked in pits and hauling trucks of coal, of men who were transported for life because they "conspired" to get a little advance on a fifteen shilling per week wage. We remember the accounts of the filthy hovels in which the people lived, their ignorance and their despair. And amid the filth and brutality, and ignorance of the period to which Dr. Chavasse looks with such envy, we recall that at the close of the eighteenth century, the Attorney General under Pitt could lay it down as law, that it was high treason for any man to agitate in favour of representative government, which he declared to be "the direct contrary of the government which is established here." And when we bear in mind the rule and the degree to which the Church ruled roost, we can appreciate how longingly Dr. Chavasse looks back upon the good old days when Christian doctrines were in practice. So might some of the surviving Nazis in, say, 1950, look back upon the golden age of German and Italian Fascism.

One other gem from Dr. Chavasse. He spoke with pride of those who had gone out to war and had found Christ. We would not mind risking a good sized steak that the number of those men and women engaged in this war who have lost Jesus far exceeds those who have found him.

The Rev. Stanley Green (Ramsgate) says that "a man cannot go to church on Sunday and sing 'Take my life,' etc., and all the time be giving his employer short time and shoddy workmanship." We like to see fair play, even to Christians, and we protest against Mr. Green's slander with regard to the capacity of churchgoers. What a churchgoer cannot do in the shape of swindling other people has yet to be discovered. Let us be fair—even to Christians.

In the "Daily Mail" recently, Mr. E. G. H. Osborn gave an account of the way in which Chiang Kai-shek became a Christian. It is most illuminating. The present Generalissimo of China wanted to marry the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Soong who were Methodist missionaries, and who would not hear of a Chinese pagan marrying into their family. So Chiang Kai-shek promptly threw over the faith of his fathers—as many a good man had done before him for the same reason, and as many a good man will do again in the future. Also like many a Christian mother-in-law in Western lands, Mrs. Soong appears to have made herself a pretty nuisance, particularly with Chiang's entourage with the result that Mrs. Chiang Kai-shek has had to go away on a prolonged holiday to the U.S.A. Mr. Osborn augurs from all this that the China-Jap war "has developed into a struggle for Christian faith against German-Japanese intrigue at its Satanic worst."

This may be so, but the facts seem to belie it. How much Christian faith is there in China's 400,000,000 souls? There are of course a few Chinese Christians, mostly bewildered as to whether Romanism, Anglo-Catholicism, Methodism, or Mormonism, represents the true Christian faith; and it is quite possible that there are just as many Japanese Christians heart and soul with Japan in its war, not only against China and its Christians, but also against the Allies and their Christianity. While the Satanism of Germany never prevents any of its leaders to swear by the Christian Providence and the Divine help always given to Germany, quite as fervently as our own bishops do precisely the same. Anyway, Mr. Osborn who is considered an authority on the Far East, appears to think that China will soon have a new leader or new leaders. And will they be Christians? On that point Mr. Osborn is quite silent.



## "THE FREETHINKER"

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### TO CORRESPONDENTS

E. TRASK.—Thanks. We compliment you on your choice. Keep it up.

G. L. C.—Thanks. Shall appear.

H. TOMLINSON.—As you will see, there is an article in this issue dealing with the matter. Somehow Mr. Shaw appears to be obsessed with this story of his being almost selected for the Presidency of the National Secular Society. Someone was pulling the leg of one of our leading leg-pullers.

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### SUGAR PLUMS

WE are pleased to see that teachers are beginning to wake up to the evils of the religious clauses of the new Education Act. A very good letter on this aspect of the Act was published in the "Schoolmaster" for November 9, under the signature of "Unbeliever." He says quite properly that the clause of the Bill which provides "no teachers shall suffer disadvantage by refusing to teach religion" is humbug. He says:—

"Any teacher bent on promotion will have to give religious instruction, irrespective of whether he believes what he teaches or not. To withdraw on conscientious grounds would make one a marked man utterly without hope of promotion to a headship. In the eyes of most members of L.E.As., refusal to give religious instruction would condemn a teacher as unfit to be in charge of the education of children."

As a matter of fact even under the present rule teachers may be excused giving religious lessons, but how many have the courage to refuse? But when the new Tory-cum-Christian Act comes into force hypocrisy will be more general than it is to-day. On this question "Unbeliever" says:—

"I enclose my name and address as evidence of good faith but not for publication, because I have no wish for my Christian employers to put me in their black book, at any rate till a show-down cannot be avoided."

But what care the Churches about honesty of character? The important thing for them is to control the child's mind until it reaches puberty. It is for them life or death. If they cannot secure clients before they reach the years of understanding they have small chance of securing them afterwards.

But Catholic teachers seem to be very unhappy about their future, if that future is to be directed by their own Catholic hierarchy. A few of them keep writing to the "Universe" protesting that they prefer to be in Council schools because there is in these at least a little chance of getting on, while "there is little or no chance for promotion for women teachers in

Catholic schools." And as for being obliged to teach religion according to the agreed Syllabus, "it can be regarded," we are told by a disgruntled Catholic, "as a detailed study of the Bible as History and Literature, not as teaching faiths or morals." We would like to know what Mr. Butler thinks of that barefaced double dealing of the professed meaning of the Act—an Act specially designed to teach the Bible as both Faith and Morals?

We can do little more this week than to register our thanks for and our pride in an article that appeared in the "Daily Herald" for November 21, by Michael Foot on Thomas Paine. The occasion was the American Thanksgiving Day in the Albert Hall, directly after the appearance of the article. The pity was that Mr. Foot did not deliver the article as a speech from the platform. It would have given a much-needed lesson, an insight into the nature of things, and a lesson in real history that probably 75 per cent. of that vast audience—from the Prime Minister downward—sadly needed. The British people have no other person to whom they should with greater cause raise their hats. And Americans have none whom they should thank with greater justice for the freedom they were celebrating. We shall deal with the matter fully next week.

And what a chance our Prime Minister had to show an understanding of history and appreciation of one of England's greatest sons. Consider the effect on the audience if he had, instead of saying a few flowery things that have been said over and over again, brought home to them the truth that to none did Americans owe more than to an Englishman—Thomas Paine. It would have been the more telling for so many present were members of the families who hunted Paine out of England, who found no lie too false, no story too filthy, so long as it was directed to those two world-shaking books "The Age of Reason" and "The Rights of Man"—a Beveridge a century and a quarter before his cure for poverty and degradation was placed before the people. But the chance was lost, and the repetition of political commonplaces did an appreciated duty. What a host of lying may be perpetuated by simply not telling the truth.

From the "Picturegoer" for November 11:—

"Our readers will be interested to learn, following the news we gave about Franchot Tone's desire to play the revolutionary Tom Paine, and producer Adrian Brunel's ambition to make such a film, that Walter Wanger has bought the rights of "Citizen Tom Paine."

"That means the picture will be made in Hollywood. "Paine's religious beliefs will be left off the screen."

Of course. We have managed somehow to make leading Christians drop the long string of lies about Paine, but care is still taken to omit all reference to his anti-Christian attitude, both in America (which owed Paine so much) and in England (in which he did so much, even to advocating a Beveridge Plan more than a century and a quarter ago); but it takes more to make Christians as a body feel either sorry or ashamed of the lies told about one of the greatest of Englishmen.

Almost with bated breath, certainly with a sense of contact with greatness, the "C.T." informs its readers that Mr. C. S. Lewis (a sample of whose quality we have given in these columns) "testified from personal experience that the scientific picture of the world needs a theistic background to make sense." Well, if Mr. Lewis has the matter in hand there will be two backgrounds needed to make sense; one may be a re-reading of science, the other will be a re-educating of Mr. Lewis where the significance of modern science is concerned.

Stands Scotland where it did? We are happy to say it does—at least where education is concerned. The Scottish Education Department has prepared a pamphlet in which it says that part of what it calls "juvenile crime" on Sunday is due to there not being available cinemas and places of amusement. It says that "Young people are seldom found in great numbers in churches on Sunday evenings, there are no places of amusement, and there are only the streets for most of them." Scotland is certainly moving; but the clergy will naturally stick to the continuation of the degrading "Sabbath."



## GEORGE MEREDITH: FREETHINKER

(Continued from page 446)

MEREDITH'S chiding of Maxse has already been noticed. He was not hostile to his friend's views, but only to his method of making them prevail. Premature fighting was more than likely to injure the attacking side. The Christian religion, at least in England, rather averted intolerance than invoked it. "What I venture to say," Meredith continued, "is: Live on and be placable under some trifling irritation, till men are near a majority (or nearer to one), in contempt of exposure; or till the apprehensions of priests prompt them to commence their old game. At that hour is time enough for us to think of action." He was sagacious enough in his prophecy. "In about twenty years' time," he wrote in 1865, "we may expect a conflict to come." And there was a great deal of actuality in the way he expected it to arrive. "The Church," he wrote, "will have to be recruited from a lower, a more illiterate, necessarily a more intolerant class. These will find themselves at variance with their intellectual superiors, and in self-defence will attempt to wield the Dogma and knock us down with a club." All this was sane enough. But it must have been a want of experience that made Meredith hope this would be the whole of the process. He deprecated "bawlings in the street." He apparently supposed that advanced ideas could be confined to persons of "culture." He did not understand the function of the "mob" in these matters. What the Church did in the Dark and Middle Ages was extremely simple. It could not kill the heretics itself. Even then they were too numerous to be disposed of in that way. The Church really let the mob loose upon them. If the secular ruler happened to raise objections they hurled the mob at him. It was not until the Protestant mob stood up against the Catholic mob that a change occurred. It was not until a more Freethinking mob stood up against both the Catholic and Protestant mobs that the area of toleration widened. Ingersoll's epigram, that the Church never left off burning people alive because she was ashamed of it, but only because there were too many people at last who objected to being burnt alive, is profoundly true. Leslie Stephen, John Morley and the rest of them would have laboured in vain if it had not been for the more popular propagandists like Holyoake and Bradlaugh. Great ideas do not win through academics. They are fruitless until they operate through the great living world of men and women. It is curious that Meredith did not recollect that all the chief religions of the world were founded by open-air preachers. When the tocsin of persecution was sounded, as Meredith believed it would within the twenty years, it was not the Stephens and the Morleys who were struck at by the priests. They struck at Bradlaugh—the man of the people.

Meredith took the practical view of the matter after 1880. In the meanwhile his hatred of the priests deepened, and his sarcasms—even in these printed Letters—became more mordant. Bradlaugh's attacks on Christianity, we have already seen, gave him a personal pleasure in view of his experience of the clergy. Writing to Maxse in January, 1870, he said:—

"The Parsonry are irritating me fearfully, but a non-celibate clergy are a terrific power. They are interwound with the whole of the Middle Class like a poisonous ivy. Oh! for independence, that I might write my mind of these sappers of our strength."

In another letter to Maxse he warns his old friend against improper names for his children. He is specially severe on Millicent. "Millicent avaunt!" he cries. "It's a proper parson's wife's name. It overflows with female priggery. You

have to lift the nose to announce it." The reference to the famous Beecher-Tilton case is quite savage:—

"You have seen the papers and meditated upon the Beecher-Tilton scandal. Guilty or not, there is a sickly snuffiness about the religious fry that makes the tale of their fornications and adulteries absolutely repulsive to read of, and but for the feeding of the reptile sarcasm in our bosoms, it would disgust one more than a chronicle of the amours of costermongers."

Four years later the popular Freethought was stimulated by Tyndall's great "Belfast Address," which was in a sense an epoch-marking challenge to obscurantism, as well as a splendid statement and defence of evolution. Meredith did not let it escape him:—

"Tyndall's Belfast address you have seen, no doubt. It has roused the clergy, Fred. *They* warned away from science! *They* excluded from the chief works of God, and told to confine themselves to the field of the emotions! They affirm that Tyndall is an atheist, and would dare to say he is already damned if the age were in a mood to hear that language. The man or the country that fights priestcraft and priests is, to my mind, striking deeper for freedom than can be struck anywhere at present. I foresee a perilous struggle with them."

The great war, then, was against priests and priestcraft. In that view Meredith never afterwards wavered, as we shall see presently in his later letters to me.

But let us turn for a moment to the question of Meredith's attitude towards religion in his writings, and more particularly in his poems. He never sent me his novels; they were for all the world. He generally sent me his volumes of verse, of which there were few recipients. His poetry was for those who cared and understood.

During the great period of his productiveness as a novelist Meredith wrote very little verse. That was natural. It was also natural that when he took to writing verse freely again he should be less expert than he would have been without the long interregnum. James Thomson once remarked to me that, while Meredith's prose was magnificent, and often of absolute perfection, he seemed not to have mastered the technique of poetry. That he could have done so is sufficiently obvious to competent readers of his happiest efforts after the opening of the 80's, and still more so in view of such superb earlier work as "Modern Love" and the most beautiful and melodious pieces in the earliest "Poems" of 1851, which contained the first draft of the triumphant "Love in the Valley." But the fact remains that he did not; and as want of technique often results in want of lucidity—for technique, after all, is the method of the writer's approach to the reader—a good many people have found his poems difficult and even obscure; although, for my part, I do not recognise any real obscurity in Meredith except that which is but another name for the reader's sleepy-headedness. His meaning is clear enough if you take the trouble to master it; but, of course, it is of no use to try to read such a poet—with a mind at once so full-packed and so rapid—as you would read a common sixpenny novel, or as you would play a domestic game of cards after a heavy supper.

I take first of all the volume of 1862. It contained "Modern Love," and if that be not a great poem no great poem was written during the second half of the 19th century. The fifty stanzas—sonnets they are not—deal with a most subtle love tragedy. The poet starts the fiftieth with a final flash of his genius upon the characters and their situation; then he suddenly turns to a reflection which is probably of greater significance than he contemplated:—

"Ah, what a dusty answer gets the soul

When hot for certainties in this our life!—



In tragic hints here see what evermore  
 Moves dark as yonder midnight ocean's force,  
 Thundering like ramping hosts of warrior horse,  
 To throw that faint thin line upon the shore."

That wonderful image is almost too great for the perplexed couple of tragic figures even in that wonderful poem. It fitly applies to the whole range of man's finite life in the midst of the infinite universe. Huxley and Spencer devoted whole pages, whole chapters, to Agnosticism and the unknowable. Meredith, before them, put the entire substantial truth into four of the greatest lines in the poetry of the world.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued)

### "WHAT'S IN A NAME?"—Shakespeare

SOME readers, or re-readers, of Dickens' one detective novel—delightful though unfinished—still pose the question "Who was Datchery?"

But surely Dickens made this plain himself. Datchery appears to be first introduced to readers as Mr. Bazzard, clerk to Mr. Grewgious, who describes him with a good deal of detail as "misplaced," and later on adds "in a solemn whisper" that he has "written a play, a Tragedy" (chap. XX).

We read also that Mr. Grewgious "treated him with unaccountable consideration" and remarks that "if he had his way he wouldn't be here."

If Bazzard had no important part to play in the plot we may well ask why should Dickens picture him as a remarkable and most uncommon and original character. And further, why should his absence from the office of Mr. Grewgious (the good angel of the story) which the latter mentions, merely saying "he is off duty here altogether just at present," be timed to fit in with the arrival of "a stranger," who appears in Cloisterham (chap. XVIII) under the name of "Datchery," written inside his hat?

Soon after the arrival of the "stranger" at "The Crozier" (the orthodox hotel) he tells the waiter to "take my hat down from that peg, will you? Look into it. What do you see written there?" The waiter reads "Datchery." "Now you know my name," said the gentleman, "Dick Datchery."

We may ask why all this perfunctory talk about a name, unless a change of name was to be clearly indicated to readers.

Bazzard is introduced to readers as "dark-haired with tangled locks," and we read of Datchery's "shock of white hair" accompanied "with black eyebrows." Both Bazzard and Datchery are mentioned by Dickens as having very hearty appetites. Other characteristics may speak for themselves, but most prominent among them are Bazzard's dramatic proclivities, which seem to fit him for playing a part. One small incident may be noted. When Mr. Datchery "walked with his hat under his arm . . . he clapped his hand up to his head as if with some vague expectation of finding another hat upon it." We may well ask what possible interest could this detail have if not to rub in, so to speak, the fact that the hat in question was not the one with which the wearer was familiar.

Perhaps the most convincing confirmation of the belief expressed here, that Bazzard is Datchery, is the conviction that the carefully drawn and detailed sketch of his clerk, Bazzard, which the very observant and astute Grewgious gives to his visitors, would be unaccountable were it not that Dickens had a distinctive part for him to play, either in bringing the murderer—if murder there was—to the gallows (probably most people feel it ought to be Jasper) or in clearing up for all time "The Mystery of Edwin Drood."

MAUD SIMON.

### EPISCOPAL PENSIONS

Self-sacrificing as are the vast majority of our clergy, somehow there is generally a very strong human note when it is a question of salaries. According to some new rules dictated by the Episcopal Pension Measure, bishops are to receive on retiring from £500 to £800, irrespective of length of service. The lower clergy raise no particular objection, but they do say that their pensions also should be increased. We agree, so far, and in many cases would have no right even to interfere in arrangements being made. But we believe that proper arrangements should be made to maintain old people, but in this case, and certainly so far as the Church of England is concerned, the wealth of the Church is actually public property, and we have all of us the right to say something on the matter. And here we have to say that the number of clergy appointed, or selected should be in proportion to the demand. That we know is steadily shrinking. In the ordinary common-sense way the supply should be measured by the demand. If that were done the number of clergymen in the country could, and would, be halved, and a better payment, with pensions, provided. But where religion is concerned the smaller the demand the larger the number of spiritual watchdogs that are provided.

### CORRESPONDENCE

#### "PSYCHIC NEWS."

SIR,—I must formally deny Mr. Barbanell's suggestion that I have at any time labelled him. Consequently, I cannot apologise for something I have not done. The only other point concerned the publication of my letter in "Psychic News." I voluntarily and promptly explained to "Freethinker" readers that Mr. Barbanell had published my letter after all, and I also gave him a private explanation which showed that I had been a victim of circumstances. I do not think better justice could be done, nor done more promptly.—Yours, etc.,  
 F. J. CORINA.

### SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

#### LONDON—OUTDOOR

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

#### LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.): Sunday, 11 a.m., Professor G. W. KEETON, M.A., LL.D.—"The Law of Moses and the Code of Hammurabi."

#### COUNTRY—INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanic's Institute):  
 Sunday, 6.30 p.m., Brains Trust. Bring your questions.

Glasgow Secular Society (25, Hillfoot Street, Dennistoun):  
 Sunday, 3 p.m., Mr. T. L. SMITH—"America, its Problems."

Leeds Freethought Society (The Forum, 113, Park Lane, Leeds):  
 Sunday, 7 p.m., a lecture.

Leicester Secular Society (75, Humberstone Gate): Sunday,  
 6.30 p.m., Mr. COLIN McCALL—"The Menace of Religion  
 To-day."

MISTAKES OF MOSES, by Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price  
 3d.; postage 1d.

THE MOTHER OF GOD, by G. W. Foote. Price 3d.; by  
 post 4d.



## ADVERTISING THE CHURCH

### I.

JUST fifty years ago was published Zola's "Lourdes" which, I suspect, is very little read nowadays. It was the first of a trio that the author called "The Three Towns"—the other volumes are "Rome" and "Paris"—and it was a devastating attack on the credulity and superstition engendered and propagated by the so-called cures supposed to be regularly taking place at Lourdes.

Zola's book stands by itself. No one else has even attempted to do what he set out to do (as far as I know), and the replies by professed Catholics are so feeble that their titles are almost unknown. If ever any book could damn a belief or a faith—call Lourdes which you like—it was this one; yet Lourdes goes on as merrily as ever, millions of people never question its divine efficacy, and after the war the pilgrims streaming down to the little town will exceed in number anything that preceded it.

"Lourdes" is half fiction and half fact, and as its author was a poet and a romantic as well as a great reporter, the descriptions of what he saw for himself are life-like. In no other work of his has he wielded so masterly a pen—and re-reading it just recently I was more fascinated than ever. He has put together the most vivid pictures, I think, ever attempted of a pilgrimage to Lourdes, with unforgettable snapshots of the unfortunate victims of a Church exploiting to the utmost the credulity of its superstitious sheep.

Zola does not shriek or rant. Simply and with great patience, he narrates the facts as he saw them. Bernadette, the little girl who was the heroine of Lourdes, he treats most sympathetically. No one knew better than he the power of delusion or, it may be in the case of Bernadette, actual fraud. The Church, through some of its members at first opposed the little girl, refusing to believe that she had seen the Virgin; but public opinion was too strong and the wily old Church with its long experience of human nature soon saw which way the wind was blowing and gave in.

Zola never denied that cures had taken place at Lourdes, particularly those clearly seen to be nervous disorders. Other so-called miracles were not really cures at all, as the patients had not been ill. Their doctors' diagnoses were wrong. Zola interviewed a number of people but could never find one to declare that he actually saw a miracle. He told Robert H. Sherard in an interview:—

Lourdes, the Grotto, the cures, the miracles, are indeed, the creation of that need of a Lie, that necessity for credulity, which is characteristic of human nature . . . Lourdes grew up in spite of all opposition, just as the Christian religion did, because suffering humanity in its despair must cling to something, must have some hope; and on the other hand, because humanity thirsts after illusions. In a word, it is the foundation of all religions.

From this it will be seen how thorough was Zola's Free-thought, and only those who were in France when he died can really know the hymns of thanksgiving wafted to heaven from Catholics all over the country. Zola was accidentally asphyxiated, and God alone could be responsible for such a punishment to the impious unbeliever.

"Lourdes" was completely banned in the town for years—quite possibly it is still banned. E. A. Vizetelly who has so ably translated Zola into English, when he went to Lourdes, found no bookseller who had a copy—except the railway book-stall which, he tells us, "rightly insisted upon freedom of action." Vizetelly declares that after seeing Lourdes for himself, he found Zola's "descriptions marvellously accurate"—

indeed his only criticism was that Zola "understated rather than exaggerated the truth."

I could not help recalling all this when I recently saw the film "The Song of Bernadette." It was a German refugee author's attempt to re-create what actually happened to Bernadette and the effect the story she told had on contemporary opinion. Let me say then right away that, as a film, it really is well done and I found it strangely moving. Most of its direction is superb, and the girl who takes the part of Bernadette seemed to me singularly well-fitted for her role. Naturally, the opposition Bernadette encountered when she related the story of her vision is heightened to make the events more dramatic. But Franz Werfel, the author, must have had in mind the way the Gestapo questions its victims when he depicted the way Bernadette was treated by her own Church. But does Werfel succeed in convincing his audience that the apparition of the Virgin, or should I say the Virgin herself, was actually seen by the little girl? This has been a sore point with Catholic critics. For the way in which the film interprets the vision is quite illuminating.

What Bernadette saw—or said she saw—was an exact replica of the picture of Mary reproduced in France on thousands of cards and in books by cheap lithography. It was a kind of re-hash of the way in which the great artists of the Renaissance depicted the Virgin, mostly based on what contemporary women wore when at their best. The film shows it quite clearly, and it was this which Catholic critics were smart enough to see knocked out the idea that it was truly the Virgin herself who appeared to the little girl. But there is another damning proof of the utter fraud of the whole affair. This is the name given by the Virgin to Bernadette—"I am the Immaculate Conception," she said. The dogma of the Immaculate Conception was formulated by the Pope in 1854—four years before the "Vision" at Lourdes. It was by no means accepted by all Catholics—indeed, it had been opposed in the past not only by Augustine, but by Aquinas, and even a number of Popes. The Church had never before quite made up its mind as to whether Mary was born without sin or not, but after Pope IX published his bull, it was settled for all time; and Catholics must now believe it because it is a Papal dogma.

In the days of Bernadette then, it was the cause of acute controversy, and no one need be surprised that an ignorant little girl hearing the words "Immaculate Conception" so often applied to the Virgin, made her "vision" declare that she was the "Immaculate Conception." The little girl had not the ghost of an idea what it meant. (Incidentally, I have known even Freethinkers in these days confuse it with the Virgin Birth).

But be that as it may, for a great number of people "The Song of Bernadette" will have strengthened their faith. It looks so true they will cry. And the Church has certainly received an advertisement which must be worth untold wealth to it. I will have something more to say on this question in my next article.

H. CUTNER.

### YOUTH AND THE CHURCH

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