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Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

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Price Threepence

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Education and the Churches

THERE are three ways of launching a lie. One is to tell a plain lie and have done with it. The second is to tell half the truth and so distort the remaining fragments. The third is to distort the facts and so suggest a lie. Of the practitioners of these methods the priesthood, ancient and modern, are entitled to the first place; they yield the pride of place to none, not even to a politician seeking election. But in defence, it is only fair to say that the priesthood has had a much longer experience and practice will tell here as well as elsewhere. For example, the politician is expected to tell the truth, and if he is once clearly exposed he may forfeit his position. The preacher runs no such risk. At the moment, Thomas Paine is undergoing a kind of resurrection, and his high character is beginning to be recognised. Yet we cannot think of a single clergyman, of position who has had the decency publicly to apologise for the slanders heaped upon Paine by his clerical enemies. In such matters, the priest is lying for the glory of God, and "If my lie hath abounded to the glory of God, why then am I counted a sinner." The answer is that the priest is not so counted. He receives words of comfort from his brother priests for having been unfortunate in his exposure.

We were reminded of this phase of Church ethics by a report in the "Hucknall Dispatch" of a speech given by the R.C. Bishop of Nottingham, on the alleged injustice to Roman Catholics by the new Education Act. First of all, the Government has insisted that all schools receiving Government grants must bring their establishment up to a certain level of excellence. But the Roman Church is not primarily concerned with education as such. What it is concerned with is that the children of Roman Catholics shall not be subjected to the contamination of non-Catholic teachings of history and religion. Apart from this there is no reason why there should be any R.C. schools. The complaint is not that the State supplied Secular Education is bad, the complaint is rather that it is too good—that is it is too expensive. The bishop does not, of course, complain that the standard set is too high, his complaint is that it is too costly for the richest church in Christendom to meet. He does not bother to point out that the portion of the cost of education paid by the Roman Church is very small. He insists that the whole cost of education should be met by the State. The State must pay all, but the complete control of the schools shall be in the hands of the Church. In other words the Roman Church is to be completely subsidised by the State.

Now I think that this is really a case where logic justifies itself, but that can be made clear only by bearing in mind the history of religion, and particularly of the Christian religion. A law of a community should apply to all, and

so far as religion is concerned there was a time when that rule operated. In primitive communities the individual who offends the tribal gods is brought sharply to heel. He is punished with the greatest publicity so that the god may see that his followers are in earnest. But that religiously idyllic state of things is broken, or at least disturbed by contact with other gods, and a certain degree of live and let live comes into existence. We see that brought to a fairly high state in the Greek and Roman civilisations where a point was reached that one could have any opinion one pleased about the gods provided the principal ones were treated with a certain degree of outward respect.

Christianity, which developed in a Liberal society, was permitted to grow up on these conditions, just as the Germans were permitted to develop a form of social compulsion which has threatened the civilised world with ruin.

The Christian Church was not without liberty to worship its own god, or gods, but in return it denied the right of others to have the same measure of freedom. From the Christian position that was, and still is a logical position.

It is the position of the average Christian to-day. If there were only one true God, all the rest being frauds, or mere imaginary existences, and if that one God was of a very passionate, jealous dog-in-the-manger character who might show his displeasure by sending a plague or an earthquake, regardless of whether his loyal followers suffered, the right worship of the right god was of first consideration. The historic Christian churches made tremendous efforts to keep God in a good humour, and if in the process whole communities were wiped out (there were Christian Hitlers long before the present German one made his appearance) they were carrying out the will of God.

Meanwhile, we may note that education was not wholly under State control. There were numerous schools in both Greece and Rome and education had at least the patronage of the rulers of the respective countries. (It was left for some of the States of Christian America in the middle of the last century to count it a criminal offence to teach a slave to read and write). Moreover, the Roman slave owner was proud of the education of his slave, often treated him with respect, and buried him with full honours. Schools existed under Government patronage in both Greece and Rome. The Christian Church centred its attention in praising God.

I must interpose another consideration here. We read of schools being established among Christians in the tenth and eleventh centuries. It is well to remember that the schools were few; they were of poor quality, and whatever was good in them from a purely educational standpoint, came from Mohammedan and Jewish Spain, and the "schools" of the periods named had nothing whatever to do with the "people." The people, in fact, did not emerge in this Christian country of ours until the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Real light came with the French

revolution of 1789, and if there was ever a happening that the Churches and the aristocracy of this country hated, it was that uprising. There was then exhibited a hatred that stood without an equal until the same interests were faced with the Russian revolution of thirty years ago. All that the Churches and vested interests of this country had to do was to change the name from France to Russia.

A Little Bit of History

We must go back a little in our story to the point where the Roman Catholic Church was supreme in matters of education. The claim made by the Church is one that makes it a State within a State, and therefore makes it a standing threat to the whole of the community. What the Church claims is unquestioned control of Marriage, Education, Morals and Religion. When it has these privileges, it practically controls the State. When it has not that power it usually works by underhand methods. While the Church held a commanding position it naturally insisted that children should be brought up as members of the Catholic Church. It was not a case of the State and Church being at loggerheads; the State had no legal control over education, and therefore could not interfere. But when Protestantism led to the State taking charge of religion the situation was changed. Heresy and treason became almost exchangeable terms, but James I held to that identity. Moreover, there were now two gods in the offing—the God of the Protestant and the God of the Roman Catholic. The followers of each denied the legality of the other, and each brought from their God what they considered unimpeachable letters of introduction. To make the certificates unquestionable, each one wrote his own testimony.

For a time the control over education was transferred from the Roman Catholic to the Protestant, that is, whatever form of Protestantism happened to be in power. In our own case it was the State Church. But again there was nothing in the shape of national education. The larger part of the nation—the “common” people—had not yet emerged. How slow and how late was that emergence of the people may be realised when about three quarters of a century ago John Richard Green wrote his famous “History of the English People”; there was quite an outburst of indignation from the “superior” people that history should be tacked on to the people. Substantially, the “people” began to emerge just before the French revolution, but it was kept dark. It was really a European revolution that broke out in France, just as one may call the Russian outburst a world revolution that broke out in Russia.

With the developments of the nineteenth century the dangers to the Church increased rapidly. So did the demand for a better system of education for the people—the “common” people, as good Queen Victoria would have framed it, with the implied understanding that “common” meant “no consequence.” But Beaconsfield’s two nations had arrived, not merely in the world of economics, but in the world of religion. There were at least two gods on the horizon. It is sheer humbug and dishonesty to pretend that Protestant and Roman Catholic worship the same God. Each claims to have a message from God and the messages do not agree. They also have different heavens. For the benefit of others let us hope that they have different hells.

I think that what has been said will make the educational position plain with regard to the kind of taste and longing the Roman Church displays where education is concerned. So long as we use words with moderate exactitude we may say that the Roman Church hates education, but loves and insists on instruction. Education stands for a broadening of view, liberality of action and freedom of thought. But instruction may stand for anything that is false. As a Roman Catholic, Hitler saw this and practised it. The Roman Church does not seek to broaden the outlook of its pupils, but to restrict it within the limits of Church interests. The good Roman Catholic believes according to the Church. The faith of a Roman Catholic is expressed by his belief in the impossible.

But lest it be taken that I am more in favour of our English Church than of the Church of Rome, I hasten to say that I prefer the English Church only as one prefers a mild dose of poison to a strong one. Individual members of the Church of England took some interest in the education of the people, but the Churches as distinct bodies showed little interest in the education of the people, further than to stress the duty they owed to superiors, the importance of respecting their betters and to be guarded against Deists, Theists and Freethinkers.

Those who wish to realise the state of education in this country as late as 1840 would do well to read the chapter on education in that authoritative book “The Age of the Chartists,” by Mr. and Mrs. Hammond. The truth is that the churches were never seriously concerned with the education of the “common” people. But they were concerned with seeing that if young people were to be taught anything it should be under religious supervision. What the education given was worth was indicated by the fact that as late as 1850 a Government Commission reported that although the sum granted by the Government annually was about £40,000; the State was not receiving value for money.

None of the Churches was interested in forwarding education, and the reader must be careful not to mistake care to see that the religion taught was the right sort of doctrine for concern to educate the people. That is a distinction we should have always in mind when we are dealing with the Churches and the educational question. As a Church, whether Roman Catholic or Church of England, the real interest is not to educate the children. The real purpose is to see that if education is to be given to the people it must be accompanied by a surety that the right kind of religion will be taught. Hence the Church schools, the Roman Catholic schools, and so on. Education is made subservient to the interests of this or that religious body. That there are men and women in the Churches who are genuinely interested in education I have not the slightest doubt. But the interest of the Churches, as such, in education is purely professional. The professionals of the Churches know full well that if the child escapes the hands of the priest the chance of capturing the educated youth is poor indeed.

What we must always bear in mind is that the Churches as Churches, the clergymen as clergymen, the Christian as a Christian, is not in the least interested in education as such. They are all concerned in making the position of

their Church as strong as possible. Hold on to that social truth and one will understand the clergy and appreciate their tactics. Let go of that truth and one becomes the tool of a system that has left its imprint on some of the darkest pages of the world's history.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

ATHEISM FOR BEGINNERS

II.

ONLY those who are familiar with the intense Protestantism of Victorian days can understand why it was so difficult for Freethinkers then to "deny" God. The very word "Atheist" roused the meek and gentle Christian to a fury difficult to describe, and no calumny was too strong to be told of any man who insisted, not only in his disbelief in a Deity, but in an actual denial that there ever was such a person. That is, I suspect, the reason why so many Freethinkers were anxious to have it clearly understood that they did not "deny" God unless that God was "defined"—and then, as far as I have been able to discover, the defined God was promptly denied.

Take a work like George Jacob Holyoake's "Trial of Theism"—perhaps the best book he ever wrote—and you will find it packed with arguments of all sorts against Theism, but very, very cautious when it came to denying God. Of course the Lord had a bad time at Holyoake's hands, but he did not like the word Atheism, and proffered Cosmism as a better substitute. The Cosmist, he declared, believes in nature which is "self-existent, self-subsistent, self-active, the Eternal, the Infinite and Material." Nature is "the sum-total of things as far as they are, objects of our senses." For Spinoza, "Nature," "Substance," "God," meant the same, causing tremendous discussions as to whether Spinoza was a "God-intoxicated man" or a mere Atheist.

Naturally if you say, or claim, Nature is God, then you cannot "deny" God. But when people talk about God, they do not mean Nature, but the "Person" who created Nature. It is a Creator who is meant, and a "personal" one at that. And as soon as you drag in the personal aspects of a Creator you give a Bradlaugh, or even a Holyoake, a fine opportunity for showing the impossibility of a Personal Creator existing. In other words, you are defining God and he is at once denied.

George Jacob Holyoake's brother, Austin—undeservedly neglected—wrote a number of excellent pamphlets, and he was never afraid of proclaiming his Atheism; yet in his "Thoughts on Atheism" he has this passage: "Some religious persons charge Atheists with denying the existence of God. But no Atheist of any position who has written or spoken on this subject, so far as I am aware, was ever guilty of such folly; for to deny would imply that you knew there was no God—which would be equivalent in presumption to saying there is one." Austin Holyoake preferred putting it this way, that of the old Chartist, Thomas Cooper:—

"I do not say—there is no God;
But this I say—I know not."

This position is that of Agnosticism—or at least it came to be called Agnosticism. The great Thomas Henry Huxley, wearing a top hat, did his best to make Atheism popular among the "upper" classes by an approach not quite so radical as the utter denial of God, and pressed the claim that we do not know whether a God exists or not; we had better suspend judgment. Herbert Spencer took almost the same attitude except that he learnedly talked of the "Unknowable" which always struck me as being of the same substance and shadow as Dean Mansel's "Absolute."

Austin Holyoake insisted that Atheists did not deny God but only "the representations of Him" I like the capital H. But as he and his brother, George Jacob, and Bradlaugh and, I am certain, even Huxley were all ready to throw overboard every representation of God, I have never been able to see what was the ultimate object of all these attempts to show that Atheists never deny God.

After all, they did deny Osiris, Krishna, Amen Ra, Siva, Venus and Apollo. They never suspended judgment on these deities. And if we have added a few more attributes to God or have what is called a "higher" conception of a God, or what a God should be, than had the ancients, this surely does not make him more credible.

In the end, Bradlaugh had to deny God—when he was defined. And so had Austin Holyoake, who said: "The idea of a roving Father, beyond and above all nature, all-powerful, all-knowing and all-good, who made things, and who watches over his creatures with ceaseless care, is fascinating; but calm reflection shows that such a being cannot exist, and it is no use deluding ourselves with the idea."

What the moderns have done, backed up as they are by the great advances in science, is to shift the problem in a way most disconcerting to believers. It is no longer, does a God exist or not?—but what was it that made the Theist presume a God at all?

You and millions like you believe in the existence of God. Very well, we have to account for this belief; and that is just what Tylor, Frazer, and their followers have done. Once one gets an inkling of the primitive mind—as far as we can get to it—before the great facts of nature, we can trace the evolution of the God idea; we can see how it has evolved from fear or a fetish, or from some anthropomorphic conception of the savage as to what a god should be, to the ideal, let us say, of Plato or Berkeley. But there is not a scrap of evidence for the existence of a god whether it is spelt God (with a capital G) believed in by the Archbishop of Canterbury or the Chief Rabbi, or a god (always spelt with a small g) the being invoked by a native witch-doctor. That is why I, at least, do deny God, Austin Holyoake notwithstanding.

Unfortunately, as I pointed out in the previous article, a denial of God almost always leads one to a discussion as to who made us, or the world, or the Universe, and it is from this argument so many Theists claim that they can prove God exists. It was Archdeacon Paley who made a great name with what is called the Design argument, and it is here that the beginner should tread warily. He should master Paley for himself and then see how, step by step, he can be answered.

Actually, Paley put the problem very simply. If you see a watch with all its intricate mechanism for the first time you are bound to come to the conclusion that it was designed—that it did not make itself. So, in exactly the same way, when you see a world like ours with all its wonderful parts working harmoniously together you must come to the conclusion that it also was designed exactly for that purpose. How can you otherwise explain the marvellous harmony and unity of Nature? It so obviously bears the marks of design that only one conclusion can be arrived at—that there is a God who is the Author and Creator.

But if you insist that a Design implies a Designer, then a Designer implies a Person, and a Person implies some kind of organisation, and an organisation surely must have a maker or a Creator? In other words, by the same kind of reasoning that this world of ours requires a Designer, so a Designer in turn requires a Creator, and he in turn another one, and so on—endlessly. It is the old Atheistic comment: "Who made God?"—and that simple query has bowled over many a Theist.

No one saw this more clearly than some of the more enlightened Christians, and I shall give some of their comments on the Design Argument in the next article.

H. CUTNER.

ACID DROPS

EVERYONE knows the story of the cobbler who informed the world there was nothing like leather. The descendant of that cobbler must have surely appeared at a Liverpool meeting in the person of a minister who, discussing "Economic problems in the light of religion," solemnly declared that what was required was "more religion." But we have been saturated with religion and are still watered with it. We have religion protesting against healthy recreations on Sunday; we have a bench of bishops in the House of Lords; we have an appeal to God at every meeting of the House of Commons; we have a king who was appointed a couple of centuries before he was born; and we have—so far as it can be managed—children who are to have an extra dose of religion mixed up with their lessons. And we are to have more religion! Apparently the clergyman who asked for more religion meant what he said.

Our sympathy goes out to the people of Lindsey (Lincolnshire). The County Council has decided to have prayers before each session. We do not have knowledge about the quality of this council, but sincerely hope that it is not as bad as it looks. The council has before it the House of Commons which opens its proceedings with prayers from a paid preacher asking God to give the members a proper sense of wisdom and justice, and look at the result? The people of Lindsey should be warned in time. Why not try a glass of whisky all round?

From the Vatican comes the news that by the command of the Pope France is to have another Saint looking after it. It still has, of course, Joan of Arc, but probably because the papacy thinks that she did not do all she ought to have done when the Germans invaded, the Pope has appointed a second Saint in the person of Saint Teresa. This should have some effect in bringing cash into the coffers of Rome, but no financial report will be issued.

The clerical-cum-Tory plot established the re-entry of the clergy into our schools, and one would think that the new Act would have satisfied the Churches. But the cry now goes out that the Churches cannot succeed in their aim unless the parents lend a hand. The children must go to schools which, to quote the late Archbishop of Canterbury, are saturated with religion; also the children must have a home that is saturated with it too; and by these means religion will stagger along until we develop sufficiently to follow the example of Russia and leave religion to those who require it. No one appears to bother very much about the children. They are so many pawns in the clerical-cum-political game.

Of course we believe parents know just as much about God as do the clergy—what He is and what He wants us to do, etc. On this subject, parson, teacher and parent are all equally informed as to what God wishes, but we also suggest to parents who have a properly directed sense of their obligations to their children, that they have no right whatever to permit their children to become so many pawns in this political-religious game. To say that one leaves them to form their own opinion on religion is simply adding humbug to what is being done. Fortunately many children when they grow up cast off the religious yoke, but even then they often lack, as a consequence of their "mis"-education, a proper sense of the value of intellectual rectitude. And much of the apology for not withdrawing children from religion is just an apology and that is all. If the parents will they can help their children to develop a sense of intellectual independence. We are pleased to state that we have had many letters from parents who have withdrawn their children since the passing of the Act, and we hope many others have followed the same line.

Col. S. W. Hall-Thompson, Minister of Education for Northern Ireland, contends that their education plan is better than the English one. We cannot say that it is better, but it is less dishonest, for in Northern Ireland the clergy have the right of entrance to see that religion is taught "properly," that is according to the visiting clergy. Still, it is logical. Moreover it forces

these advocates of religion to say what they mean, which in itself is something with a class that seldom mean what they say. It enables the clergy openly to keep an eye upon the teacher and the teacher gets a lesson in mental dishonesty and timidity which he can hardly evade passing on to his pupils.

Mr. W. J. Ferrar, in the course of an article in the "Contemporary Review" for February, says: "Our Church, our parson, our bells mean something." Of course they do, and when understood they are a very interesting something. The only ones who can appreciate their meaning are those who do not believe in any kind of religion. The astonishing thing is that all these articles in defence of religion are harking back to the state of things that existed in pre-evolutionary days. A few hours spent in studying an up-to-date work on "modern" anthropology will do more to help one to understand religion than any amount of attending church and "praying for light." The man who prays for light will find the kind of light for which he is searching. After all the most successful kind of feeling is when one fools oneself.

It is an astonishing thing—or it would be if we were not familiar with the phenomenon—to note the persistence with which the clergy of all grades claim that salvation depends upon belief in Christianity. For example, the Bishop of Southwell, Dr. Russell Barry, comes down on us with the statement: "Amid the confusion of a ruined world Christianity stood for the eternal principles by which alone men and nations lived." One would imagine from this that Christianity was something that was recently discovered and now is brought before the public for the first time. The reply is for many, many centuries Christianity has been in power. It has ruled people from the cradle to the grave; from the crown to the gutter. Laws have been made to protect Christianity, and from the cradle Christianity has exercised its power. And now with the world in ruins we are presented with the same lie uttered by the mouths of these same Christian leaders. If a government failed so obviously as Christianity has failed it would be kicked out of office at very short notice.

We have noted several attempts to boost the new Archbishop of Canterbury as a great man. We are not surprised. The virtues of the office are inherited by the official. The outside, however, will recall Dean Swift's explanation of the quality of the clergy that the English Government sent over to Ireland. They were all good, pious and brilliant—when appointed. But somehow they never arrived. So Swift explained that on their way to Ireland these great and good men were waylaid by brigands who murdered the godly ones, then dressed themselves up in clerical attire, came to Ireland and pocketed the salaries.

It is evident from some of the Roman Catholic papers that many R.C. followers are a little shocked and greatly surprised to realise that a marriage in a Catholic Church is not in the eyes of English law. We judge this to be the case from the frequency with which this question is raised, and the manner in which it is fumbled with. A statement that no legal marriage exists in England other than one sanctioned in a building licensed for the purpose and performed by one holding a licence from the Secular State. A Church may be licensed—as a building, not as a Church—and a parson may have a licence from the State for the purpose of creating a contract. And there the matter ends. Whether you bow to Mary, sing to the Virgin, or howl to break a glass with a Jewish Rabbi makes not the least difference.

A simple statement would be enough. But one simply must not expect straightforwardness from a Catholic priest. So we have another long rignarole in the "Universe," telling the enquirer what as Catholics they may and may not do. All could be said in the few words above. The religious marriage was legally banished by Act of Parliament. The R.C. priest does not hesitate to tell his followers that a civil marriage is not a "real" marriage. That is a lie, and he knows it. It is the only marriage recognised.

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

BENEVOLENT FUND N.S.S.—The General Secretary N.S.S. gratefully acknowledges the following donation to the Benevolent Fund of the Society: Mr. H. A. Lupton, £1.

J. B. SALTER.—We read your letter with interest and pleasure, coming from a young man. But don't allow your youthfulness to overcome your conviction that you have started a journey that will continue to be profitable. There should be in schools, as you suggest, some attention paid to the history and significance of religion from other angles than the Christian. One day we hope that will be the case. Meanwhile, our advice is fight for your own ideas, and do not be overawed by authority. After all one of the conditions of progress is to sweep away the "certainty" of one's elders.

F. E. JONES (Buenos Aires).—Letter safely to hand; we have acknowledged this by post.

For "THE FREETHINKER."—G. Simpson, 17s.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2-3, Furnival Street, London, E.C.4, and not to the Editor.

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Lecture notices must reach 2 and 3, Furnival Street, Holborn, London, E.C.4, by the first post on Monday, or they will not be inserted.

SUGAR PLUMS

WE expect that most of our readers will have listened to a broadcast some time ago by Professor Julian Huxley, on his grandfather, T. H. Huxley. The broadcast was well done, and Freethinkers will have listened to it with great pleasure. T. H. Huxley was a great force in his day and might easily have been greater. A born fighter with a fine style as a writer, and a rare capacity for making understandable to ordinary folk the significance of technical and difficult subjects, he is still a pleasure to read. He was also the creator of the word "Agnostic," a term which, in relation to the existence of God, has all value knocked out of it by the fact that to-day we do know how the belief in gods came to be. He was also many-sided in his interests which ranged from a study of classical philosophy to the conduct of modern schools.

Those who remember the broadcast will be pleased to learn that it is now available in pamphlet form—"Julian Huxley on T. H. Huxley" (Watts & Company); price sixpence. We quote but one passage which consists of his reaction to a letter of sympathy to him on the death of his young son. Kingsley had the Christian impudence to retail the hope in immortality by way of cheering him up. To this Huxley replied:—

"As I stood behind the coffin of my little son the other day with my mind bent on anything but disputation, the officiating minister read, as part of his duty, the words: 'If the dead rise not again, let us eat, drink and be merry, for to-morrow we die.' I cannot tell you how inexpressibly they shocked me. St. Paul had neither wife nor child or he must have known that his alternative involved a blasphemy against all that which was best and noblest in human nature. I could have laughed with scorn. What! Because I am face to face with irreparable loss because I have given back to the source from whence it came the cause of a great happiness, still retaining through all my life the blessings which have sprung and will spring from that cause, am I to renounce my manhood, and howling grovel in bestiality? Why, the very Apes know better, and if you shoot their young the poor brutes grieve their grief out and do not immediately seek distraction in a gorge."

That is well said, and pointed to the truth that Christianity degrades man from the cradle to the grave. Of course, Kingsley did not appreciate this; he was a clergyman, and we let him off with the remark that the poor devil did not know better. So he offered an insult when he intended to condole. One day all will realise what many have already realised—that this grovelling before an imaginary god, proclaiming ourselves as criminals unable to do our duty as men and women without supernatural help, is one of those long-termed insults the churches throw at decent men and women. The passage cited is worth the charge for the pamphlet.

On Sunday, March 4, Mr. R. H. Rosetti will speak in the Cosmo Cinema, Rose Street, Glasgow, on "The God Men of Science Believe In." The lecture begins at 2.30 p.m.; admission is free, with donation tickets, which may be had from 75, George Street, Glasgow C.1, and from Collets Bookshops, 15, Dundas Street, Glasgow, C.1. This will be the last lecture of the season in the Cosmo Cinema and the local Secular Society is expecting a fitting closure to a well attended course.

We recall a broadcast recently which took the form of a dramatic exhibition of the Trial of Charles I. It was one of the most deliberate pieces of dishonesty we have met. This was not because of what was put on the stage, but because it was one of those insidious lies that function by what is suppressed. Charles had shown that he was a liar; he made promises and broke them, and he was obviously aiming at the strangulation of Parliament; it has also been suggested that he was ready to bring foreign soldiers, if necessary, to gain his end. In the B.B.C. the judges are made as coarse as they dare be made, and the King confined his defence by asking in a gentle manner to be shown by what law he was being tried. Of course he was banking on the fact, as did his father, of the divinity of Kingship, and if that had been accepted only a message from God would have had any power. So the play ended with a poor, presumably innocent king being sentenced by a mob of ruffians. If the B.B.C. departed from its practice of misleading people on such matters the picture would have had a different background.

We have returned to this because we wish to commend readers to a booklet by the Rt. Hon. Isaac Foot, dealing with Oliver Cromwell. It is one of the best bits of reading we have gone through for some time. The title of the essay is "Oliver Cromwell and Abraham Lincoln," and its influence caused me to reach down my four volumes of Carlyle on Cromwell's letters and other works. It has robbed us of some hours that should have been devoted elsewhere. But there are two features that are worth noting. First, until recent times the calumnies against Cromwell persisted, and that feeling is still strong in most of our schools to-day. Carlyle was the great cause of a revival that came with the publication of Cromwell's letters, and the innocent king with the bloodthirsty roundheads began to lose ground. The literature has since grown to large dimensions, but Professor Foot reminds us that until recent years there was not a single monument of Cromwell in the country. There is now a statue of Cromwell at Westminster, but its erection was bitterly opposed in Parliament, and it came very near rejection. Yet the bitterness against him almost equalled that against the bloodthirsty Bolsheviks who shot the Czar.

The other thing we wish to add, and all that our space will permit, is that the close likeness of the language and aspirations and ideas between Abraham Lincoln and Oliver Cromwell will come as a surprise to many. The B.B.C.'s Charles I with the dramatic "Under what Law?" was put to Lincoln when the decision was made to end slavery. All we can say more is "Damn the Hon. Isaac Foot." He has sent us prowling round all sorts of volumes of history when we should have been doing other things. The booklet is published at 2s. 6d.

We note in the "Shields Evening News" a very good letter from the Secretary of the North Shields Branch of the N.S.S. dealing with the question of a Free Sunday. Such letters are good propagandist work, and we should like to see much more use made of the press. There are many Freethinkers in that district, and closer contact with each other would lead to profitable results.

"OLD JIM"

By the Village Grocer

NEARLY seventy years in a village and a lot of them as a grocer, you begin to see things in their true light, and as you grow older you think more, anyway that's how it appears to me.

We had in the village an old boy named Jim Hubbard, he was the Village Snob. He was rather good at boot repairing and he thought he was rather cute. He had a partition around the inside of his shop to keep the draught away when the door was open and used to speak to the customers through a trap door arrangement. You had to be one of his "specials" to get into the room to talk to him. The village kids used to sing outside his window "Old Jimmy Hubbard works in a cupboard," much to his annoyance, but he seemed to have many good points. He would mend a kiddie's shoes and if the mother seemed poor would only charge for the materials and often not charge at all, as he used to say: "There's only me and the missus and we don't need much now."

The vicar would always give Jim his boots to mend and as Jim used to say, "Poor old boy, the vicar's living is very poor here and I feel I should help him," so the vicar and his wife usually got a decent reduction in the price.

Jim's wife was a member of the church and Jim himself once went; the sermon the vicar gave was "Sell all that thou hast and give to the poor and follow me." It impressed old Jim and he decided that he would lead a good life in the future and could often be heard singing as he drove in the nails, usually one of Sankey's hymns. On one occasion I was passing and I heard Jim singing "My Old Companions fare thee well, I will not go with you to Hell." I tapped on his window. He let me right into his shop and started telling me what a good time he had the previous evening. He had been to a Salvation Army meeting and had been really converted; in the future he was going to be a Christian.

I congratulated him and told him I hoped he meant it, for it was a big job to be a Christian. He told me he had always led a good life, that was one of the reasons for him being so poor. He had tried all his life to help the under-dog, and I know he had. Well, the vicar heard the news and he told him it had upset him as he should be like his wife a member of the Church. Jim differed and became a Salvationist and tramped the streets and attended open-air meetings in the wet and mud with the S.A. when he could have been comfortable in a nice warm church, but Jim was happy. Alas! the day came when Jim had a shock. He had done a lot for the vicar, always thinking he was so poor, but the vicar had installed a young man in a smart shop as a boot repairer and the bulk of the trade had gone to him. This upset Jim, but he continued on with the S.A. and he found things a general struggle. I suppose in his heart he wondered why this had happened, and with the new snob cutting prices and attending the church, being a sidesman and other things poor old Jim got in a real bad way.

I myself wonder why these things should be allowed by God to happen but they do, perhaps as Jim thought, for a good purpose, but old Jim had to shut up shop and take himself and wife to the workhouse.

The vicar died soon after and left a few thousand pounds to the young shopkeeper, who turned out to be his illegitimate son. I wonder why such people flourish. I saw old Jim and spoke to him about it; would you believe it, he started singing "Some day, some day, we'll understand." Will he? I doubt it.

A few weeks later the new snob (snobby nature also) left the village taking the vicar's fortune with him. Aided by the other villagers we set old Jim up again in his old shop and gave him a fair start. Jim said the Lord had done this for him and we were his agents. Most of the people who had helped didn't think so.

Jim was a necessity to the village as the next snob was a good way off. He again began to flourish and sang hymns as he drove in the nails, usually with a vengeance, and he again became known as Old Jim Hubbard.

He stuck to the S.A. but his wife went to the Church. The new vicar, a nice docile young man, found plenty to do in the district and no doubt had some sort of a struggle with a wife and five young kiddies, but old Jim helped him out in the cost of his snobbing.

I could not make Jim out; I told him so. Jim began to sing "Count your blessings, count them one by one." So I went off and left him. He was happy so what mattered. For that is the best thing in life to live for—"Happiness."

A few weeks later I heard that Jim had had an accident and been removed to the infirmary to have one of his legs taken off. He had been knocked down by a runaway horse whilst at an open-air S.A. meeting; this was the result. I went and saw him in the infirmary and was surprised at the smile on his face. He greeted me with a laugh and said: "Only one boot to mend in future," but old Jim had mended his last boot.

At the funeral as usual the S.A. made a great show, the vicar was there and the bulk of the village. The army officer referred to him as Happy Jim and said: "He now is happier still." That didn't console his wife for she cried pitifully.

Poor old Jim, was he ever really happy? Is he happier now? Did he have a square deal out of life? I don't think so, and his favourite hymn "Some day, some day, we'll understand." Will we?

F. G. REEVES.

GODLESS BRITAIN

ONE can sometimes obtain considerable amusement from the complaints of the medieval-minded orthodox in this modern world, and I think that a gem of a book which I recently bought second-hand from the sixpenny box of a North Country bookshop is something which, with my well-known sympathy for the general gaiety of Freethinkers, I cannot keep to myself. For all I know, it may have been noticed here on its first appearance in 1935, but I cannot recall that it was. It is entitled "Britain Without God: An Exposure of Anti-Godism," and its author is a self-styled "London Journalist"—though, judging by the unskilful way in which he writes, I should say that he had merely served a few months as office boy on a paper a long way from Fleet Street. There is a preface by that super-optimist, Sir Thomas Inskip (who has since been extinguished under a peerage the exact name of which I cannot at the moment recall).

The book is divided into two sections, of which the second is of the most immediate interest to readers of these columns. The first section deals with the menace of Atheist Bolshevism and contains a choice selection of those stupid and blood-curdling tales with which our anti-Soviet publicists were wont to alarm Tory Churchmen in the days before Russia became our proud and glorious Ally. It is, incidentally, amusing to note that all sorts of organisations which have no possible connection with Soviet anti-religious propaganda are denounced by our perspicacious "London Journalist" as inveterate enemies of the Church. Such societies as the Friends of the Soviet Union, and the National Unemployed Workers' Movement "suffer" from the honour of being denounced in this book.

The cream of these horrific revelations, however, come in the second half of the volume which deals with "Rationalistic Propaganda," as manifested by the National Secular Society and the "Rationalistic" Press Association. No doubt our friends of the R.P.A. will be amused to see themselves so described, and they will be to learn that "the N.S.S. represents what might be called the Atheism of the Streets, in contrast to the R.P.A. which represents the Atheism of the schools and universities."

Admittedly, the author pays "The Freethinker" the compliment of saying that it is "the most live Atheistic magazine circulating in the land," but he adds that there is in it not much evidence of thought. Since he goes on: "The same might be said of the books and booklets sold at meetings . . . The writings of Thomas Paine, Colonel Ingersoll, G. W. Foote and Charles Bradlaugh are sold, together with some by present-day writers of whom Mr. Chapman Cohen is the chief," others who contribute need not worry. If our journalist's standard of thought is such that he does not consider that those whose names I have quoted are clear thinkers, the rest of us who contribute gratefully to the columns of "The Freethinker" need not imagine that we deserve any sort of condemnation for doing so.

I cannot find that this book by such a consummate and clear-thinking journalist cuts very much ice. The copy which I obtained was the second edition in four months, but I cannot recall ever having seen it reviewed in any paper of general interest—and I am a fairly assiduous reader of book reviews.

In fact, our "London Journalist" keeps very dubious company. He quotes with apparent approval the most biased and unfair writers on Soviet Russia, and he even produces triumphantly a paragraph which appeared in the "Leader" on February 7, 1933, and which stated: "When men or women reach years of discretion they are entitled to decide what form of religion, if any, they will adhere to, but small children have not sufficient powers of reasoning to make a decision about so vital a thing." Exactly; hence the reason for our agitation against dogmatic religious teaching in the schools, which our pious friends so fervently support.

Our opponents do not change very much in their methods. Misrepresentation and abuse have always been the weapons of intolerant religion, and presumably always will be until religion dies. It is funny, however, to realise that the "London Journalist" apparently thinks in all seriousness that an increase in evangelistic activity will be enough to offset the advances which heterodoxy has made during the last generation or so. Evangelism! To fight against the work of Sir James Frazer and J. B. S. Haldane, of Bradlaugh and Foote, of Chapman Cohen and Charles A. Watts with the methods of Moody and Sankey is to fight against tanks with rifles of 1900 style, or to attack aeroplanes with small-bore machine-guns. One wonders how long it will be before the religious folk will realise that it is totally impossible to put back the clock. They do their best, of course, but it still remains impossible. And the more science advances the greater becomes the impossibility of stemming that advance by a religious counter-attack.

S. H.

"OUR FATHER WHICH ART IN HEAVEN."

Papa has told me there's a God,
A God the Father up above;
Who fashioned all from breeze to clod
As Dad created us—by love!
Much like himself, a heavenly pater;
Yes, just like Dad, but vastly greater.
So great, so good, so wise, so solemn,
And larger than the Nelson Column,
And you must pray to him for bread,
And that it may not be too hard;
For if you don't you won't be fed,
As he's a crusty kind of card.
And if by chance he cuts up rough,
Oh! don't he make the pie-crust tough,
And wallop you and punch and cuff,
As Dad does too when in a huff.
They've leprosy, cane, brick, and spatter,
A thousand blades to flay live matter;
They say they do it all for love,
But how they lay it on, by Jove!

A. B.

CORRESPONDENCE

RELIGIOUS FAITH.

SIR.—A speaker broadcasting recently on the subject of post-war betterment said that besides other things more religious faith will be necessary. I should like to state several reasons, through the courtesy of your columns, why I think that this view is at fault.

(a) The chief beliefs of religious life, in a post-mortem Day of Judgment and in everlasting life, have been proved conclusively to be unfounded. (b) The religious practice of presenting fancies as realities has two grave defects, it plays on credulity and it obscures the truth. As a guiding light it is at the best, but a Lighthouse of Illustrations and comprehension is wrecked on the rocks of Make-believe. (c) Man must be taught to know his limitations. I do not think that in the last resort he can master Nature, and I would offer as an example in support of this view the many lives that have been saved from malaria as a result of Dr. Ross's researches. As an off-set to this benefit to mankind the multiple lethal weapons of to-day, and also other agencies, do just the opposite; they destroy. All the while that man is striving Nature holds and adjusts the balance.

To put the matter very briefly I would suggest that "the supernatural," with its call for religious faith, is only a figurative sort of bacon-gauze which masks an illusion and certainly does nothing to better world conditions, inspiration having its source in the earth which we tread.—Yours, etc., J. EDWARDS.

OBITUARY

RICHARD BEAUMONT FOWLER.

A veteran Freethinker and member of the N.S.S. Richard Beaumont Fowler passed away in his 83rd year on February 10. The immediate cause of death was bronchitis. For some years he had been in bad health, although the end was peaceful and free from pain. He was a member of the West Ham Branch N.S.S. until he left that district, when he took up membership at Headquarters. He was also a constant reader of "The Freethinker."

The remains were cremated at The Golders Green Crematorium on Friday, February 16, where before a large assembly of relatives and friends a Secular Service was read by the General Secretary of the N.S.S.

R. H. R.

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., ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON, M.A.: "Whither Europe?"

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (38, John Bright Street, Birmingham).—Sunday, 3.30 p.m., Brains Trust. Two papers read by young refugees and audience to ask questions.

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanic's Institute).—Sunday, 6.30 p.m., Mr. F. J. CORINA: "Its That Man Again?"

Glasgow Secular Society (25, Hillfoot Street, Dennistoun).—Sunday, 3 p.m., Mr. T. L. SMITH: "The International Labour Organisation."

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., Dr. KOCZ: "Problems of South-Eastern Europe."

CHARLES I AND OLIVER CROMWELL

"Look here on this picture and on this."

—HAMLET.

AS expected the broadcast version of the Trial of Charles I caused heart-burnings in many people which were reflected by comments in the Press. The writer of "Acid Drops" in this journal had a few words to say which were not complimentary to the "Martyr King." The "fresh and enduring interest of that grand crisis of morals, religion and government" will be always a bone of contention between monarchists and republicans and between those people of opposing religious sects. To readers who prefer to withhold judgment on so important an event in British history, and, on the other hand, those who may be prejudiced concerning the characters and ambitions of Charles I and Cromwell may be interested to read of the opinions of well-known poets, historians, statesmen and authors. Unless we have made a study of the events which led to the Civil War, it is possible that our opinions may be influenced by what we were taught at school and the way in which the teacher described the event. The writer's recollection is that Cromwell emerged as the hero of the piece!

ON CHARLES I

God save King Charles! God knows that pleasant knave;
His grace will find it hard enough to save.

—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

. . . . And the Stuart, he who serene in his meekness,
Bow'd his annointed head beneath the axe of rebellion,
Calm in that insolent hour, and over his fortune triumphant.

—SOUTHEY.

The royal blood which dying Charles did sow,
'Twas in dishonour sown,
We find it now in glory grown.

—COWLEY.

We detest the character of Charles; but a man ought not to be removed by a law *ex post facto*, even constitutionally procured, merely because he is detestable. He must also be very dangerous. We can scarcely conceive that any danger which a state can apprehend from any individual could justify the violent measures which were necessary to procure a sentence against Charles.—MACAULAY (Essays).

We regard the death of Charles as an atrocious and abominable murder . . . which has lowered for ever England to the level of the adjoining nations in the scale of crime.—SIR ARCHIBALD ALISON.

King Charles I was a prince whose conduct was grave and pure . . . he was diligent, learned and frugal; reserved, yet not morose; dignified, yet not arrogant; possessed a noble upright mind; a friend of justice; his virtues gained him the esteem of all good people. But neither Charles nor the English knew how much they were estranged, nor the causes at work, and growing into power to prevent them from mutually appreciating each other.—F. P. G. GUIZOT.

Charles had neither vision nor grasp. His fault—and no statesman can have a worse—was that he never saw things as they were. A remark thought tolerably conclusive by Milton and by Voltaire is that the regicides treated Charles precisely as Charles, if he had won the game, undoubtedly promised himself with law or without law that he would treat them. From the first it had been "My head or thy head," and Charles had lost.—JOHN MORLEY.

There would have been less attachment to the memory of the weak and perfidious Charles, if his weakness and perfidy had not been glorified by his death.—GOLDWIN SMITH.

Charles I . . . had an ungracious and chilling manner, an imperfection of speech—of this he was insensible.—LORD LYTTON.

ON CROMWELL

So Cromwell, with deep oaths and rows,
Swore all the Commons out o' th' House.

—SAMUEL BUTLER.

Or ravished with the whistling of a name
See Cromwell damn'd to everlasting fame!

—POPE.

The scourge and servant of the Lord
This hand the Bible—that the sword—
The Phantom—Cromwell rides!

—LORD LYTTON.

Cromwell was a saint-like thief, who, under the double cloak of religion and patriotism, committed a burglary in the constitution and robbed the people of their title to liberty.—EARL OF CHATHAM.

It was fortunate for Cromwell that he appeared on the stage at the precise moment when the people were tired of Kings; and as unfortunate for his Son, Richard, that he had to make good his pretensions at a moment when the people were equally tired of Protectors.—VOLTAIRE.

This fanatical hypocrite.—DAVID HUME.

No royal name, at least since Alfred's, is more worthy of our veneration than that of the "Usurper," Oliver Cromwell.—ALEX NICOLSON, LL.D. (Ency. Brit.).

He was sincere, his faith was genuine. He did not care what means he used to keep his place. As to these means they were admirable: a greater actor, liar, traitor or hypocrite could hardly be found in history than Oliver Cromwell.—Dr. OSCAR LEVY.

Oliver Cromwell remains to me by far the remarkablest governor we have had here for the last five centuries or so . . . there has been no governor among us with anything like similar talent.—THOMAS CARLYLE.

In the world of action the greatest, because the most typical Englishman of all time.—S. R. GARDINER.

He was a practical mystic, the most formidable and terrible of all combinations.—LORD ROSEBURY.

The inspiration of Scripture predominated, in 1600, over the three Kingdoms. Cromwell, more imbued than any other with this sentiment was neither a politician, nor an ambitious conqueror, nor an Octavius, nor a Caesar. He was a Judge of the Old Testament.—LAMARTINE.

Cromwell was a tyrant; but of his personal ambition this is truly to be said, that it was never seen but directed to the promotion of his country's greatness.—LORD NUGENT.

Cromwell, our chief of men, who through a cloud
Not of war only, but detractions rude,
Guided by faith and matchless fortitude,
To peace and truth thy glorious way hast plough'd.

—MILTON.

These few extracts are representative of a large number for and against both Charles I and Cromwell, but space does not permit enlargement. The strongest indictment of Cromwell comes from Dr. Oscar Levy in his book "The Idiocy of Idealism" (Hodge & Co., Ltd.), which is strongly recommended to every Freethinker—and Christian.

S. G. HOGG.

THE BIBLE HANDBOOK. For Freethinkers and Enquiring Christians. Edited by G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball. Passages cited are under headings: BIBLE CONTRADICTIONS, BIBLE ATROCITIES, BIBLE IMMORALITIES, INDECENCIES AND OBSCENITIES, BIBLE ABSURDITIES, UNFULFILLED PROPHECIES AND BROKEN PROMISES. Price 2s. 6d.; postage 2d.