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The Lay of a B.A.

*An Open Letter, with an Introduction  
to the (Rev.) J.R. Higgs, B.A.*

If the (Rev.) J.R. Higgs, [B.A.]'s letter is an elaborate leg-pull, it is exceedingly well done, and we congratulate the writer, who displays his university degree to some purpose, B.A. signifying Brightly Argumentative.

If the letter, however, be intended seriously, which we can hardly believe (August 15, 1929), we hesitate, out of some relics of chivalry that we still possess, to beard one who ventures so naively into the Lion's Den. "A spaniel come to judgment?" However, duty is duty; and *some* duties are pleasant. So we obey the voice of Conscience, O Mr. Higgs, though we will try not to hit too hard. More than that we can promise no parson, B.A., or no B.A., living.

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Now, Mr. Higgs, come, come. We really *must* dissent. You have *not* "spent many hours in the London parks proving to them [Atheists] the futility of their position. You have only (more modestly) *attempted* to prove it. If you had *proved* it (a thing impossible in nature) you would have convinced or converted them. How many—honestly, now—have you convinced or converted to date?

Mind you, we are not blaming you; no doubt you did your best (we would not say "damnedest"); but, my dear Sir, Big game hunting with a peashooter . . .

"If," you say, meaning the *Freethinker*, "claims to be up to date, ahead of the time, etc., etc." Would you be so courteous as expand that "etc., etc."? Surely "up to date, ahead of the time" fits the bill, as it were? We suggest, modestly, that the pulpit habit of exaggeration, hyperbole, etc., etc., is responsible for this regrettable redundancy, dear Sir. Do not, we beg you, ask us to expand out "etc., etc." We would not willingly shock you.

And oh! That poor, long-suffering "General Public"! Spoon-fed with decaying tripe, it is supposed, by the innocent English Parsonry, to be hotly eager after anything in the slush-mush-gush line that those dead educative newspapers please to ladle-out to it, free crosswords, cinema stars' legs, monks' ghosts, the ethics of modern statuary, the virtues of jumble sales, the ethics of Hollywood, and anything else that comes handily to the enterprising, impartial, highly-paid, public (house)-spirited journalists, who naturally love that dear Saviour of theirs who has inspired so many original panegyrics, at "three guineas a thousand." So our impartial, disinterested newspapers—throbbing with a philanthropy and patent-medicine advertisements—are "satisfying the demand by publishing articles on religious subjects," are they, my dear Sir? Really! It *is* astounding, when you come to think of it, isn't it?

"Twenty or thirty years ago," or two or three hundred years ago, or two or three thousand years ago, was the Golden Age of Atheism; to-day, on the other hand, is the day of Jesus. We seem to have heard or read something like that before, once or twice, or one of two hundred times, or one or two thousand times . . . but no! we will be kind to you. But Atheism, you will admit, must have a fine, strong, healthy constitution to survive so many declines and falls.

Dear and reverend Sir, B.A., why do you think that the six points of your Charter in favour of "God" annoy us?

Those six points are not so pointed as they may appear to you.

1. "Millions listen in to a religious service." How do you know that they do? As the friends of "God" here nobbled the B.B.C., and no alternative to holy howlery and Druidic drawlings is provided, the poor "General Public" do not seem to have much option, do they?

2. Who are "best" philosophers and scientists? You speak of men as though they were labelled and priced, like tea or tobacco. The "best"! Names, Sir, please. Wake up!

3. "Most schools insist on religious instruction." Of course they insist; because they know, as well as we do, what would happen if they didn't.

4. "The Press is increasingly willing to educate the public mind (the public mind!) religiously." It is also willing to do anything else that pays.

5. The Bible has a greater circulation than any other book in the world. As it is printed for free distribution and sale below cost price, by numerous societies, run by interested pietists, is

this surprising? Religion is a vested interest in this country, and heavily-subsidized at that. Edgar Wallace or John Oxenham would have just as large a circulation in similar circumstances.

6. Certainly the fact that that excellent man the King, scholar and theologian, goes regularly to church proves Christianity to be true. Who doubts that? It would be disloyal, and even "Red."

Now, dear Mr. Higgs, B.A ., *next* time you go on the Atheist-converting lay in the London parks', look out; or your audience may quote this article at you. Wouldn't we love to be there!

Yours, in or out of Christ, as you please.

Victor B. Neuburg