

# THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED by CHAPMAN COHEN •  
— Founded 1881 —

VOL. LIV.—No. 43

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 28, 1934

PRICE THREEPENCE

## PRINCIPAL CONTENTS

	Page
<i>How Not to Do It?—The Editor</i> - - - - -	673
<i>The Dread of Death—Mimnermus</i> - - - - -	674
<i>Is There Money in Heaven?—Ignotus</i> - - - - -	675
<i>The Purity and Debasement of Taoism—T. F. Palmer</i> -	675
<i>New Evidence of Man's Origin—G. H. Taylor</i> - - -	682
<i>Birth Control and the Christian Churches—G. F. Green</i>	683
<i>A Very Christian Judge—George Bedborough</i> - - -	684
<i>A Mixed Bag—Victor B. Neuburg</i> - - - - -	685
<i>Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letters to the Editor, etc.</i>	

## Views and Opinions

### How Not to Do It?

My first impulse on reading the letter from the Rev. Walter Wynn, published in last week's *Freethinker*, was to append a brief note and leave it at that. Second thoughts led me to adopt a different plan and pay the communication more detailed attention, because it does express a very common confusion between fact and fancy, proof and mere assertion, scientific statements and the statements of scientific men. It is really a very religious letter.

The article to which Mr. Wynn takes exception (*Freethinker*, September 30) was a running criticism of a contribution of Mr. Wynn's to the *Sunday Referee*, in which he professed to explain why God did not prevent such disasters as the burning of the "Morro Castle." The explanation was that death was a translation to another sphere, and that we might actually enter into communication with our dead. Mr. Wynn's rejoinder to my criticism consists of ten paragraphs, and putting on one side the opening one, the rest are, separately and collectively a splendid example of what an argument should not be. For that reason Mr. Wynn must pardon me if I use him as an illustration of the way in which things should not be done. I do this with less hesitation than I otherwise might, because as Mr. Wynn believes that nature is controlled by a designing mind, it must be either that he was intended to expose my foolishness, or I was designed to lay bare his—unless we adopt a third hypothesis that we were both designed to show that neither of us knows what we are talking about. The reader must choose which hypothesis is the most reasonable.

\* \* \*

### Good and Bad Company

Mr. Wynn is obviously annoyed because I used the word "Silly." He seems to think I used it of him, whereas I used it only of a particular thesis propounded by him, and that is a very different thing. I used it very kindly, for I said that when a parson propounded a sensible question he was almost certain

to give a silly answer. That was not dealing harshly with the clergy. It was allowing them fifty-percent of sense in their statements, and that is an extraordinary high percentage, as almost anyone will admit—for parsons. It was not insulting them; it was paying them a compliment.

Like a good Christian Mr. Wynn shows no resentment at my calling him "silly" (which I never did), but takes up the position that if he is silly it would apply to a number of eminent men who believe in Spiritualism. Which reminds me of a friend who excused himself for making what I thought a silly statement by retorting that he was, in that case, in good company. But if a man *does* make a silly statement he can never be in *good* company though he can find a number of eminent persons who make the same statement. It may be a numerous company, but it cannot be a good one. It is in fact a very bad company, so far as that statement goes. History is full of distinguished men and women who have had the silliest of beliefs, and done the silliest of things. Silly things would never have got established if numerous distinguished men had not championed them. Numbers is no guarantee of sense, and eminent men are never absolutely proof against folly. It was a very eminent man who was credited with making a house for two dogs, a little one and a big one. He made a big hole for the big one to enter and a smaller one for the little dog.

\* \* \*

### God and a Future Life

Mr. Wynn's conception of an argument is very naïve. He says that when he states that his dead son spoke to him, "I either state a fact or I did not." The issue is not so simple. All it means is that Mr. Wynn states what he believes to be a fact, and I have no desire to contradict that. But there are numerous people who state as a "fact" that they have seen Jesus, heard angels sing and devils whisper. There are facts *and* facts, and we need not say a man is a liar because we do not believe what he says. It may be that he is mistaken. Mr. Wynn also says, with a pathetic faith in great names, that the scientists he names would "instantly" accept his word. Quite probably, if they believed in that kind of statement before he made it. And then comes this crowning piece of wisdom, "Assume I did speak to my 'dead' son, and he to me, does not that fact knock the bottom out of a purely materialistic universe?" I might grant it does; but *if* pigs fly there is nothing surprising in someone seeing them going through the air. Really all Mr. Wynn is saying is, "If what I say is true, is not the opposite of my statement false?" I have not the slightest hesitation in agreeing to that proposition. May I very humbly suggest to Mr. Wynn that a statement of belief in anything only proves a belief in that thing. If he will ponder on this, he may save himself a great deal of trouble.

As it is he makes a very interesting study, though logic is not his long suit.

But, really, in the article to which Mr. Wynn takes exception I was not concerned with whether Mr. Wynn had spoken or had not spoken to his dead son. I was wholly concerned with Mr. Wynn's defence of God in the case of such disasters as the Gresford Colliery accident or the burning of a ship at sea. He argued that God was blameless, because God had so constituted nature that each one of these dead persons would live again. It was this apology which I said showed a monstrous misunderstanding of the nature of human affection and the function of death. I cannot see that if we live again there is no justification for pain when death carries those we love out of this world. I cannot imagine a parent not suffering pain at separation and at death, and from the knowledge that his child has suffered a horrible death on the "Morro Castle," or in the Gresford pit. Mr. Wynn says that he has often allowed pain to happen to his children for reasons they could not comprehend. So have we all. But Mr. Wynn, and the rest of us only permit this suffering because we cannot get what we want with our children otherwise. But suppose we could? Would Mr. Wynn then permit his children to suffer pain? I doubt it. We poor mortals must do the best we can where we can. But God? Is he just doing the best he can, and blundering round because he does not see his way to doing any better? If there is a God one wonders what he thinks of Mr. Wynn as defender. It makes me think of the Eastern saying, "Save me from my friends, I can look after my enemies myself."

\* \* \*

#### Design and Nature

Getting a little more incoherent Mr. Wynn rebukes me for my criticism by telling me that "the plan and purpose of life and the universe are totally unknown to us," and then approvingly cites that lawgiver to the unscientific, Sir James Jeans that "we should not be able to understand the meaning of the universe if it were revealed to us." Now this is really too bad! After explaining to us that we do in fact live again, that this part of the scheme of things is so because God has arranged it, and that we must acquit God of all charges of carelessness where human life is concerned, Mr. Wynn now turns right about face and tells us that we are totally ignorant of the purpose and plan of life, and that if it were told us then we should not understand it. What then becomes of his explanation of God's purpose in creating beings that will never die? Mr. Wynn may plead either ignorance or knowledge—complete or partial—but he really must not plead absolute and irremovable ignorance as the ground of a proclaimed knowledge—not even when Sir James Jeans backs him up.

\* \* \*

#### God and the World

Thoughtfully providing us with another list of great names, Mr. Wynn tells us that these were all convinced that the universe was governed by a God of love, and adds that the editor of the *Freethinker*—who does not believe this, is the "one sane thinker that survives." Spare my blushes, Mr. Wynn. My modesty compels me to confess that there are millions of other "sane" thinkers who on this head share my opinions, as I share theirs. I emphasize the expression "sane thinkers" because it is sane thinkers only who do not believe in a God. There is not a case in any of our asylums of an insane Atheist. They may have been Atheists before becoming insane, but not afterwards.

Still hurling great names at my poor head Mr. Wynn begs me to consider that my conclusion brings

me "into conflict with the direct findings of modern science" (the inevitable Sir James Jeans—who ought really to be sent to school for five years to study a genuinely scientific philosophy—is dragged in) which is now asserting that "design is stamped on everything." But what puzzles me is how anyone can decide that design is stamped upon anything without previous knowledge that there is someone to do the designing. If it is not taxing Mr. Wynn too heavily, may I mildly point out that design can only be established when we can relate an *intention* to a product. You cannot in the absence of a knowledge of intention prove that anything is designed. If I know what a man *intends* creating, then I can tell how far his creation carries out his design, but unless I know this first fact, I have no ground for concluding the second. I think even Sir James Jeans would see this, if it were put to him, even though it might spoil the market for much of the nonsense he has written on this head.

Mr. Wynn, after peppering me with small shot, reserves his biggest and most devastating bomb for his last three lines. He says, "The funny part of Mr. Cohen's remarks is in his perception of the *purpose* of death. Surely it can have no *purpose*, if Mr. Cohen's previous reasoning is sound." I am sorry to spoil this gem of Mr. Wynn's, but in self-defence I must point out that I did not find a *purpose* in death, but the *function* of death in life. I find a function in many things, for the scientific definition of the function of a thing is what it does, and the function of death is that it has made us value life and has made love possible. Without death the joys of birth would have been impossible, without the pain of parting we should never have known the joys of possession. These seem like commonplaces to me, and I suppose I must put it down to Mr. Wynn's religious training that he finds it so impossible to realize the obvious.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## The Dread of Death

"The vain crowds wandering blindly, led by lies."

Lucretius.

"Death, not armed with any dart,  
But crowned with poppies."—Julian Fane.

SHAKESPEARE, the supreme genius of literature, has told us that "our little life is rounded with a sleep." This materialistic similitude of death to sleep is a thought which has possessed a peculiar fascination for great writers, ancient and modern, but more particularly for Shakespeare, whom it always prompts to utterances of universal sublimity. With this lofty thought is mingled a touch of simple pathos that strikes home to every heart, as, for example, in the saying: "Tired we sleep, and life's poor play is o'er."

Sleep! All that the human fancy can conceive of delightful and refreshing things are compressed in that gentle word. Poets in all ages and in all countries have sung its praises, but of all tributes uttered on this subject, the most striking, probably, is that which Cervantes puts into the mouth of stout Sancho Panza in *Don Quixote* "Sleep! It covers a man all over, thoughts and all, like a cloak. It is meat for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, heat for the cold, and cold for the hot."

Priests, on the other hand, have ever sought material advantage from the fact that man is mortal. They have taught their innocent followers that death is the most dreadful evil. All the terrors that theologians could gather from savage nations were added to increase the horrors, and they invariably tried to

paralyse reason with the clutch of fear. The advent of the Christian Religion actually deepened this terror, for priests of that religion used an imaginary Devil and his fearful fireworks as a lever. The terror such stories inspired was largely owing to the gross ignorance which surrounds the subject of death. Men fear it, like children do the dark, through not knowing what it is. The fear of the night can be dissipated by a little light. Death would be no bugbear if it were known better. And nobody is there to tell people, except a small number of devoted Free-thinkers, who are anathema to all the churches of the Christian World. The sermons from the clergy, out of date and packed with nonsense, deal in exaggerations and exploded ideas. "The wages of sin is death" is their idea of wisdom. The result has been that the uneducated and uncultured masses regard death as the King of Terrors, from whose approach they cower in an agony which Plato and Socrates would have scorned with lifted eyebrows. Notice how the grand old Pagans of the classic era look death in the face without flinching. Epictetus says proudly: "Why should we fear death? For where death is, there are we not; and where we are, there death is not." No less emphatic is Marcus Aurelius, who bids us regard death as "the mere work of Nature," and reminds us that "it is childish folly to be afraid of what is natural." What a contrast to the depth of misery evoked by Christian theology!

These grand old Pagans invested death with dignity, but far too many Christians fear death like frightened children. In Bacon's famous essay on death it is remarkable that all the instances he gives of its being borne with equanimity are taken from Pagan sources. For Christian priests added a fresh terror to dissolution in the thought of being cut off in sin. Even to-day the Church of England, the Parliamentary form of faith, has a prayer against sudden death, which the old-world Pagans regarded as best.

The clergy have found it very profitable to invest death with horrors. "Prepare for death, flee from the wrath to come," have been their cries. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," shout the evangelists, with throats of leather and lungs of brass. By similar appeals to fear and imagination it has made a terror of an act of nature which should be accepted with serenity. Old Doctor Samuel Johnson was not a fool, but he was tormented by the fear of death. The gentle William Cowper was driven mad by the horrors of religion. Spurgeon, the most popular preacher of the nineteenth century, preached and wrote for a whole generation that the majority of the human race was destined to everlasting torture in full view of their deity. To-day, the Roman Catholic Church, the most powerful Church in all Christendom, has not abated one solitary spark of its fiery damnation, and the Salvation Army, which caters for the lowest strata of believers, works the same threat into its trade-mark, "Blood and Fire," and the tambourines of its votaries are full of money.

Yet to the Freethinker, dissolution is an act of Nature, and has no terrors beyond the sundering of friendship or of love. This has been beautifully expressed by Lucretius, the stateliest of the old Roman poets. Mark his exquisite words, written before the advent of the Christian Superstition:—

"Thou not again shalt see thy dear home's door,  
Nor thy sweet wife and children come to throw  
Their arms round thee, and ask for kisses more,  
And through thy heart make quiet comfort go.  
Out of thy hands hath slipped the precious store  
Thou hoarded for thine own, men say, and lo!  
All thou desired is gone. But never say  
All the desire as well hath passed away."

Indeed, Freethought everywhere destroys the terrors of death. Shelley, in the lovely opening lines of *Queen Mab* hails death and sleep as brothers. Walt Whitman, "the tan-faced poet of the West," chants many a hymn of welcome to death. Our own Swinburne sings in his elegy on Baudelaire:—

"Content thee, howsoe'er, whose days are done:  
There lies not any troublous thing before;  
Nor sight nor sound to war against thee more,  
For whom all winds are quiet as the sun,  
All waters as the shore."

"That unsubduable old Roman," Walter Savage Landor, in extreme age, wrote:—

"Death stands above me whispering low,  
I know not what into my ear:  
Of his strange language all I know  
Is, there is not a word of fear."

George Meredith, one of the sanest of our poets, asks, with a fine touch of stoicism:—

"Into the breast that gives the rose  
Shall I with shuddering fall?"

Death to Sully Prudhomme was the liberator as well as the consoler. He wished to "drift on through slumber to a dream, and through a dream to death."

Truly, the Freethought poets have left the priests and their barbaric superstitions far behind. Beyond the fabled hells, the tiresome purgatories, and the tawdry paradises, the words of the great singers sound over the world. For thousands of years priests, for their own sorry purpose, have chanted the old, sad, disheartening refrain of death as an enemy, but the Freethinker listens to other strains. Paying small heed to "the lie at the lips of the priest," he dies without fear:—

"Like one who draws the drapery of his couch  
Around him, and lies down to pleasant dreams."

MIMNERMUS.

## Is There Money in Heaven?

THIS question is suggested by the Editor's recent comments upon the miraculous answers to Christian prayers for money related by Mr. Hugh Redwood. Apparently the pious mind can never conceive of a state of life in which money shall be no more, though a gifted American forty years ago showed how, if human beings were sufficiently humanized, a happy system of existence could be devised, in which money would have no place, and every one would have adequate food, shelter and clothing. The present privation, muddle and unrest are wholly due to the licence that is allowed to the world's big usurers and financiers who rig the markets, corner the food supplies and keep wealth in the possession and under the control of comparatively few people.

It is not only syncopated hands of simple American negroes who retain childishly imaginative ideas of a future existence. Myriads of apparently sane people in Europe believe in the golden stairs, the golden shore, the golden floor, golden crowns and golden harps. When the time had arrived when there was no more sea, and the weather-beaten mariners of Britain had for a monotonous period experienced life in paradise, they, according to Kipling, finally began to weary of the glorified daily round, and cried to the Lord:—

Take back your golden fiddles  
And give us back our sea!

There is no doubt that, with very many, gold like God has become a superstitious obsession. For many ages the common people without money have been inoculated with a reverence for riches and for very rich people. The poor unlettered folk identify gold with God; and many of them believe that very rich

people are the trusted and favoured deputies of the Almighty.

So far as the present life is concerned it is clear on the showing of his own ambassadors on Earth that the Almighty has bungled things very badly. A Scottish D.D., preaching before the King, quite recently remarked upon Man's marvellous "material" achievements, but deplored that his moral and spiritual progress had not kept pace with these; and stated that his moral and spiritual progress could not be assured unless by the Grace of God. The preacher was perhaps unconscious of the *naïveté* of this confession of failure. What exactly had he in mind when he spoke of "material" achievements? Amongst such achievements are to be classed improved sanitary conditions and greater success in fighting against disease—physical and mental. The most fervent and believing prayer that even Mr. Hugh Redwood could compose is no remedy against homicidal mania, consumption or cancer. Prayer, or the laying on of hands, won't relieve neuritis or heal a compound fracture of a limb. Indeed, the ordinary believer never thinks of resorting to such means. He puts more faith in an unbelieving clever doctor or surgeon. The Christian Scientists still delude their adherents with the promise to cure by prayer. The other day the death of a man of forty-seven, who was prayerfully treated by a number of Christian Scientists, was investigated by a Coroner, who very plainly told the advocates of prayer as a cure for illness that they were talking utter nonsense.

The majority of medical men know very well that a much more successful war could be waged against disease if there were more financial resources available for the purpose. In this view the treasures of the State Churches may be said to be rotting. The country really cannot afford to pay such an enormous annual sum as it does for the support of 40,000 useless priests and parsons. So long as it has to support them, the vitality and efficiency of the nation must suffer. Not a penny of national funds ought to be expended without a guarantee that it is being applied for a purpose beneficial to the people.

There are many members of orthodox Christian Churches who have sympathy with the Christian Scientists and Spiritualists. A prominent member of the latter cult told the world that he had a message from his deceased son—an educated and intelligent young man—to the effect that there are whisky and cigars in the other world. Presumably to the Spiritualist the "other world" is only one world with various grades. To the orthodox Christian it is composed of two worlds—Heaven and Hell—with no grades in either. Between these there is an impenetrable dividing wall—though an old Scotch Calvinist, Boston, said that in Heaven the redeemed and elect hear the shrieks and moans and groans of unbelievers in Hell, and see the smoke of their torments rising up for ever and ever and ever. Thereat the redeemed and elect rejoice, as vindicating the unerring justice of Almighty God.

Having now reached a higher level of intelligence, human beings—even those who still retain some vague belief in supernaturalism—are seeking for a means of salvation more and more approximating to the ideals of Humanism. Thus movements are being organized to attack the monstrous tyranny of money. The old hymn tells us that "nought that defileth" shall enter the Better Land. So Christians, convinced of the evil done by the misdirected power of money, are driven to the conclusion that there can be no money in Heaven—no shops, no betting, no dividends from armaments! Ah well, who knows?

IGNOTUS.

## The Purity and Debasement of Taoism

LAO-TZE, the traditional founder of Taoism, was a Chinese sage, whose birth is dated at 604 B.C., fifty-four years prior to the nativity of Confucius. As expounded by its originator, Taoism was a pure philosophy entirely free from the degrading superstitions which now disfigure it. The term *Tao* itself primarily signified the revolution of the orbs of heaven about the earth. This movement of the celestial bodies was assigned as the cause of the events that constitute planetary phenomena. The Tao was placed in the neighbourhood of the celestial pole, which was venerated as the great central power, because all things in the heavens revolve around it. "In course of time," Lewis Hodons tells us, "this concrete expression became abstract, and the Tao was considered as the universal cosmic energy behind the visible order of Nature." This power is impersonal, infinite and eternal when regarded as an existence only. But, from this static state it passes to one of activity, which leads to the spontaneous development of the greatest good. All things that are, the human race included, therefore arose from the evolving activities of this eternal energy.

In terms of pure Taoism this power or energy is passionless and impartial. Indeed, Tao is another name for what we call Nature. That eminent Taoist scholar, F. H. Balfour, defines Tao "as that which supports heaven and covers earth; it has no boundaries, no limits; its height cannot be measured nor its depths fathomed; it enfolds the entire Universe in its embrace, and confers visibility upon that which is in itself formless."

This ancient Eastern philosophy is distinctly evolutionary. "The nebulous haze which Professor Tyndall regards as the source of all material things," declares Balfour, "had a place in the scheme of the ancient Taoists, who spoke of the primordial aura which eventually underwent concentration and concretion, and finally emerged in the form of solid matter, with definite and various shapes. . . . The Taoist theory cannot be more ably or concisely summed up than in the words of Lucretius: 'Nature is seen to do everything for herself spontaneously, without the meddling of the gods.'"

Turning from the cosmical to the ethical, we find the far older teachings of Taoism strikingly similar to those attributed to Christ. The Taoist injunction: "Recompense injury with kindness," immediately recalls the saying, "Return good for evil." It is said that when Lao-tze's maxim was submitted to the judgment of Confucius he rejected it and sagaciously substituted: "Recompense kindness with kindness, but injury with justice."

When considered as counsels of perfection, Lao-tze's moral sayings are very soothing and perhaps from the view-point of ethical idealism have never been excelled; while their wisdom is occasionally profound. "He who knows others is wise"; he observes, "he who knows himself is enlightened. He who overcomes others is strong; he who overcomes himself is mighty. He who knows when he has enough is rich. He whose memory perishes not when he dies, lives for ever."

Taoism in its antagonism to over-legislation and the State's perpetual interference with public liberty, while leaving real grievances unredressed, plainly anticipated Herbert Spencer and his disciples by two thousand years. For the Chinese philosopher said:

"When there are many prohibitive enactments in the Empire, the people grow poorer and poorer. When punishments are overdone law-breakers increase in number." And various other aphorisms might be cited to the same effect.

Another celebrated Taoist thinker is Chuang-tzu, who lived two centuries later than his master. He protested with great earnestness against the uncritical admiration for tradition, which the Confucians displayed. Chuang-tzu claimed the fullest freedom of thought and expression, and contended that no doctrine, however ancient, should be treated as infallible. Centuries before the alleged deliverance of the Sermon on the Mount, he wrote: "Wherever one's treasure may be, there will the heart of man follow it."

Chuang-tzu's attitude towards death was notably naturalistic. He said that: "Being born pure men accepted the fact; when the oblivion of death came, they just returned to what they had been before." And it is related that when Chuang-tzu lay dying he directed that his remains should not be consigned to a grave. "I will have Heaven and Earth for my sarcophagus. The Sun and Moon shall be the insignia where I lie in state, and all creation shall be the mourners at my funeral." His friends strove to induce him to cancel this grim requirement as the vultures and carrion crows would tear and devour his corpse. "What matters that," he answered, "Above are the birds of the air, below are the worms and ants; if you rob one you feed the others, what injustice is there done?"

The *Book of Plain Words* is a Taoist manual, which dates from about 245 B.C. This compilation in several ways resembles the Hebrew *Book of Proverbs* and was designed as a guide in public and personal life. If the statesmen and functionaries of that period followed its injunctions, they must have been very different from the mandarins of later times. The *Book of Plain Words* proclaims that public men must pursue the path of honour and shine as exemplars to the ordinary citizen. A wise and upright man endowed with a sense of justice, whose plain sincerity is a pattern to all, and who remains at his post amid hatred, detraction and scorn, makes the ideal public servant. Moreover, he is one who "never takes advantage of his position to secure benefits for himself." These are excellent qualifications, but one wonders how many politicians or State-functionaries, at any time or place, ever possessed them completely.

Be this as it may, however, these lofty aspirations date from a period when Taoism was a naturalistic philosophy destitute of gods or demons, paradise or hell. Buddhism and Taoism alike have long fallen from their former high estate. As popular beliefs, they have degenerated into benighted superstitions scarcely, if at all superior to those of the least enlightened savage tribes.

It is indeed pathetic that teachings so pure as those of primitive Taoism should, in the course of 2,500 years, so sadly decline. But all authorities appear to be in agreement concerning the degradation that has occurred; Frederick H. Balfour, for instance, thus refers to contemporary popular Taoism in China. "Taoism," he states, "is a base and abject superstition, a religion in the worst and lowest sense, a foolish idolatry supported by an ignorant and venal priesthood; a system of unreasoning credulity on the one hand, and hocus-pocus and imposture on the other."

The head of this remarkable religion is a Pope, who in several ways suggests his brother in Rome. He is the leading magician or wizard of Taoism, in addition

to his sacred office as High Priest. This Pope is venerated by the faithful as the direct descendant, through the agency of incarnation, of a very potent sorcerer named Chang, whose exploits amazed mankind in the early centuries of our Era. The Taoist Pontiff possesses the important secret of immortality, and by means of the influence of his magic sword he reigns supreme over all the mighty spiritual powers of the universe.

Balfour, speaking from a personal acquaintance with the Taoist Pontiff, who reigned in the 'nineties of last century, mentions his palace in the province of Kianghsi "where he mimics imperial state, has a large retinue of courtiers, confers ranks and honours among ghosts, spirits, and minor deities with all the dignity of an actual sovereign, and keeps a large row of jars full of captured demons, whom he has disarmed and bottled-up from further mischief."

Although supernaturalistic influences had threatened at an earlier time to sully the fair face of philosophic Taoism, their degrading powers did not become fully operative until the period of the Han dynasty (206 B.C.—221 A.D.) when pilgrimages to the Isle of the Immortals became popular and a positive passion was displayed for the acquisition of the elixir of life. Also, several conflicting sects arose, and spirit-expulsion, fortune-telling and other absurdities became the rage. An adventurer named Chang Tao-Ling, who was born in 34 A.D., later led a reaction towards magical practices and beliefs. Chang acquired an immense reputation as a wonder-worker, and his stupendous powers as a magician he passed on to his successors, together with the important social and political prestige he had managed to gain.

The widely-accepted doctrine of the inevitability of human progress seems difficult to reconcile with happenings such as these. The rise, progress and ultimate decline of so many past civilizations may at least suggest that even the most highly organized modern States will have their day and cease to be. It is certainly true that ancient and medieval societies lacked the firm physical foundations of contemporary social structures, and that science plays an ever-increasing part in the maintenance and renewal of current civilized life. Yet even if material progress be practically secure, there seems no certainty of an unimpeded mental advance. The organized Churches are still powerful, and both hatred and fear of science and scientific research are still common in religious circles. Christian Science, Spiritualism and other obscurantist movements grow stronger, despite the marked indifference of the general public. One sometimes wonders whether in the Western World the conflict between religion and science is really at an end, or whether the latter must prove the permanent victor in the struggle.

T. F. PALMER.

The effect produced by the Jewish Bible for a long period of time, has been similar to that of an isolated ruin seen from a distance. People reasoned about it at random, having neither the true perspective to examine it, nor the means of studying the approaches of such a monument, namely, the neighbouring or kindred peoples who were intermingled with the Jews; the great empires to which they were transplanted and where they lived. While all this was wanting, Judea, considered alone, deceived the eyes. She filled up all the horizon, nay, she deceived the world with her phantasmagoria of religious illusions, with prismatic colours, or gloomy clouds of her allegorical mysticism.

Michelet, "The Bible of Humanity."

## Acid Drops

The Beaverbrook Press is shocked at Mussolini and Hitler bringing up children with the idea of war in their heads, and dislikes the resolve of the Paris authorities printing instructions in school books of what to do in case of air raids. So the *Evening News* says that if it had the power it would print in children's exercise books:—

An air force that can lick the other fellow's is worth a hundred hidey holes.

One can perceive the tremendous ethical difference between teaching children to believe that war must come, and teaching them what a splendid thing it is to have an air force that can lick the other fellow—at least the *Evening News* trusts that its readers will detect the difference. But probably Mussolini and Hitler may so mistake the peaceful intentions of the *Evening News* that they may have put in their exercise books:—

The British are resolved to have an air force that can "lick" our country, therefore you children must get ready for war at any time if you wish to avoid a licking.

We rather like the text selected for a sermon by the Rev. William Younger, President of the Methodist Church. The text is from the Psalms, "He shall be like a tree." That is very good for a Christian text in a Christian Church. It is so suggestive of something that is very pliant and green in its youth, and with a serviceable wooden-head at the end. The text reminds one of the incomplete one taken by a parson—"What think ye?" and the congregation pleaded "Not Guilty."

A writer in the *Sunday Referee* says that while in Germany a man in a restaurant said to him, "Liberty is not for us, we must be led." And Mr. Beverley Baxter, the writer in question adds by way of philosophic comment, "In the name of civilization, what is to be done with a nation that asks for the chains of slavery?" But it was not a nation that asked for slavery, it was one man, although Baxter might have found a million who would have said the same thing. But Germany is not made up of this type of man, the nation did not ask for chains. The German concentration camps are full, there are millions plotting for freedom, and there are millions who are afraid to speak out. What stupidity it is to take one, or a number, and then talk of that number as the "nation." It is the most dangerous form of stupidity we have to face to-day.

We meet it in all directions. In Italy Mussolini speaks of the voice of the nation when on a recent visit to Milan, over 4,000 special police had to be imported to prevent any other voice being heard. The English nation is overjoyed because Prince George is going to marry Princess Marina, when half the nation doesn't care a hang whether he marries her or someone else, or ends his life a bachelor. Hitler talks of the united voice of Germany when he has to dragoon millions of Germans to prevent their having a voice at all. Jugo-Slavia is plunged into grief over the assassination of the King, when some 6,000 people are imprisoned during the funeral in case they do not exhibit this profound grief. And as Germany says this, and Italy says that, and Jugo-Slavia feels the other, it becomes the easiest task in the world to stir up hatred against this nation which is just *one man*. And it is so easy to hate one man, but let any one sit down and try to hate forty or fifty millions of men, and see how he will get on with it.

The truth is that there is no such thing as a nation thinking as one, or feeling as one. It is a common method of creating a mass feeling, and is used on all sorts of occasions for all sorts of purposes. If there was a revolution in Germany to-morrow, and the German people established a liberal constitution, Mr. Baxter as a contributor to the papers, would write about the inextinguishable spirit of liberty in the German people, and we should then be told that the nation was burning with

the love of freedom. Every nation is made up of multitudes of heads, and in these heads there are multitudes of opinions and shades of opinion on all sorts of subjects. If we can all get that thought into our heads and act on it, we shall be less at the mercy of these newspaper phrases than we are at present, and not merely keep out of a great deal of trouble, but pave the way for better things.

According to an old song there were "Two Obadiah's." There were eight Jeremiahs according to the Holy Bible. That great authority, the Rev. A. D. Belden, hazards the suggestion that one of the eight, the one who wrote the famous "Book" bearing his name, was also the writer of "Isaiah, Chap. xi., and onwards, the greatest of the Hebrews." Certainly the nonsense of the one author is equalled by the absurdity of the other, but in that case Mr. Belden himself might be in the running. Both prophets talk about God's "roaring" (Isaiah xlii. 13 and Jer. xxv. 30), both had a blood-lust, and it is difficult to distinguish between the horrible criminality of Isaiah's "Day of the Lord," when "children are to be dashed to pieces before their parent's eyes," or Jeremiah's "Therefore deliver up their children to the famine." Mr. Belden sets us a pretty problem in relative ghastliness.

The Rev. William Platt, a missionary from West Africa, has been regaling the pious public with pretty stories of conversions and success in "actual pioneering Christianity." He narrates with gusto how Sierra Leone celebrated the centenary of Emancipation. Carefully suppressing the name of every emancipator who was not a Christian, Mr. Platt "was able to emphasize that all these men were Christians, and that each one was actually an officer of the British and Foreign Bible Society." Apart from the fact that Sierra Leone happens to be one of the signal failures of William Wilberforce, it is very Christian to delude native races by lies of this character.

A very popular young minister, Rev. Leslie Weatherhead, preaching at Manchester, assured his hearers that we must not seek "a logical explanation but a child-like trust and love." To find God we must first believe we have found Him. Then, of course, "everything can be fitted in," even "each instance of calamity and trouble," all these things "show there is a mind working." It is a "supreme mind" too. "A song, a poem, a flower, a woman's love mean nothing," if the preacher's "God" theory is wrong. Mr. Weatherhead must revise his terms. After all, whatever theory of the universe we accept, we shall always prefer a beautiful flower, a fine song, the love of a friend, to any "calamity" of any kind. Mr. Weatherhead is talking through his hat. His books show that he is capable of better things.

A pious critic of Dr. Box's latest work, *The World and God*, which deals with the scholastic philosophy, points out that "the whole foundation of Christian theology is theism, but it is a foundation of which modern Christians, including a great majority of Christian teachers, have but the flimsiest understanding." This must make very pleasant reading to "a great majority of Christian teachers"; for if there is one thing they have always been sure about, it is precisely the truth of theism, and the ease with which it could be demonstrated. The fact that books are still being poured out by Christian presses to prove the existence of God, no matter how or by what method, shows pretty clearly the question is by no means settled. In fact, except among Fundamentalists and Roman Catholics and the Salvation Army, there is positive alarm about the whole question. The existence of God seems more difficult to prove now than ever.

It is when one comes to the deeply philosophical mind of such people as the Bishop of London that one sees how easily difficulties can be swept away. With that power of subtle analysis which brings him the attention of the thinking world, the good Bishop ridicules

theistic puzzles. "It is out of date now," he cried the other day, "not to believe in God, and Victorian scepticism is as dead as the Dodo. Sixty years ago we had science against us. Now some of its most eminent exponents stand on the side of a Supreme Being behind the veil. Now it is out of date to say that miracles are impossible. Now matter is declared to be nothing and spirit everything. Now instead of being laughed at yourselves you can laugh at the Atheists for being back numbers." The Bishop should have added, the Devil and Hell really exist; the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection really happened; the miracles related of the thousand and one saints actually took place; a piece of bread can always change into a real Jesus all over the world at the same time; and so on. For that is what is meant by the Bishop. We are sure the scientists will be pleased to be roped into the special brand of Christianity believed in by the Bishop of London. It is so intellectual.

The B.B.C., the other day, gave the Rev. D. O. Soper a chance to describe his experiences on Tower Hill at question time. He is going to show in future talks how he disposes of many of these questions, especially the anti-Church ones. But he seemed very pleased to give his listeners one remarkable discovery, and that is, that though the Church is constantly attacked the standard of conduct by which it is judged is that of Jesus. The Atheists and other people who question him are always bitter against the Church, but only because it does not come up to the wonderful example of Jesus. So Mr. Soper is very pleased and still hopes to bring his questioners round to his own belief, namely that Jesus and Jesus alone can save the world. Whether any of these remarkable opponents of the Church really exist we do not know; but we can assure Mr. Soper that there are quite a number of "antis" who are opposed to Jesus just as much as to the Church. Mr. Soper may get his B.B.C. listeners to believe that a pack of fools question him; but those who know something of this kind of "mission" don't believe it is all quite so one-sided.

The editor of the *British Weekly* must be a queer sort of fish. He professes to have read Mr. Milne's Pacifist work, *Peace with Honour*, so approvingly that he is convinced that Milne has demonstrated "the absurdity, futility, brutality, and irrationality" of war. But as Mr. Hutton read also a highly sensational book immediately after, called *With Nurse Cavell*—"the one cancelled the other." He "confesses that when I read the trial and death of Edith Cavell . . . darkness covered me. . . I was a wild man. Had war been in the air and our part to be decided that day, I should have overturned Mr. Milne's candle of the Lord in my soul, and should have joined the crowd in the streets!" The Rev. John A. Hutton is a truly typical Christian Pacifist—the adjective in this case cancelling the noun.

"Can we believe in Providence?" asks the Rev. Dr. James Reid. He raises the very pressing question of men starving while the world yields an abundant harvest. Dr. Reid, naturally has an easy answer which gives all the credit to "Providence," and all the discredit to man. "This bounty of Nature comes from God: If all do not share in it, that is not His fault. He attends to the supply, He means us to look after the distribution." Dr. Reid might just as well liken it to a Public House, in which God, the proprietor keeps order in the private bar, but allows the bottle and jug department to look after itself. In that case God would soon lose his licence for the whole establishment.

Some light on the situation in Spain is thrown by a rather incautious item in the Roman Catholic *Universe* for October 19. Quoting from a Spanish priest, Fr. Munoz, it says that Spain will never be content until it has created a State "according to the ideals of the Holy Father." That means, of course, that the enormous number of priests, monks, and nuns, will be kept at work to see that, so far as it can be managed, Spain shall not be content with anything but a State "bossed" by

the Church. It is also said that Gil Robles, who is a staunch child of the Church, will not assume power until he gets an "absolute majority" which will enable him to realize this Roman Catholic ideal. For a Roman Catholic paper this is a very dangerous utterance, and it helps to explain the latest outbreak in Spain.

Perhaps the best comment on this aim of the Roman Church to control the State is that wherever any Christian Church, that is whenever and wherever the Christian religion has exerted a dominating power in the State, the Government, even when strongly Christian, has been compelled to take steps to regulate, and sometimes destroy its power and to confiscate some of its ill-gotten wealth. It is when Christianity gets this full control that its inherent anti-social nature expresses itself.

It is remarked of a deceased parson that a marked feature of his career was his interest in education—he served as manager, chairman and governor of Council and Grammar Schools. It is pretty safe to say that his interest in education was similar to that of most clergymen. They push themselves into offices connected with schools in order to safeguard religion in the curriculum, and also to see that the rest of the instruction is "safe"—that is to say, will do religion no disservice.

Among the notable sayings of the week selected by the *Observer* is one from Dean Inge. "All wars between civilized nations are really civil wars." We don't know how many times we said this in the *Freethinker* during the war, just when it most needed saying, and we are a little ashamed of the many different forms in which we said it so as to avoid the appearance of monotony. But it is quite good to have an advanced Christian thinker only twenty years behind the *Freethinker*.

It should prove interesting to "Palestinians" that the Pope takes "a keen interest" in questions concerning Palestine, and has recently sent an "Apostolic Benediction" to its inhabitants. Considering these are mostly made up of believing Jews, and more or less non-believing Jews, but who all call themselves Zionists, we are sure they will be most interested in the Pope's anxious solicitations for their spiritual welfare. The Pope should establish a Roman Catholic Mission in Jerusalem for converting all "Palestinians" to Roman Catholicism. Nothing like true religion for maintaining peace and harmony and the Jews would be so very pleased.

Mohammedan priests seem to be no better for being such than ordinary laymen. The other day the late Imam of the Mosque at Woking, Mr. Abdul Majid, was sued by his servant, Mr. Faizur Rasul, for wages due. It seems that part of the money went to a negro, Mr. Copper-Copper, who lost it. We should not have called attention to the case, perhaps, but in the course of the action Rasul said: "Mr. Majid told me my money was to come back to me if I *prayed* more." Whether this little dodge of praying for money came to the late Imam through many years of intercourse with Christians, or whether it is part of the Mohammedan creed in cases of this sort, we do not know. But Mr. Abdul Majid lost the case.

"A Priest" is writing his experiences in the *Star*, and his first article leads us to doubt the value of his judgment very much. He writes that with regards to sex he has learned that the doctors are wrong "every time," and concludes that his experience in the Confessional leads him to a deeper understanding. Now we do not say that the doctors are right in what they say about sex or anything else, but we are convinced that a doctor will know more about his patients from two or more visits than a priest can in fifty talks in the confessional. When a parson talks to a man, whether in the confessional, or out of it, the man is in the majority of cases wearing a mask. He is not likely to make himself blacker

than he can help, and is, so to speak, dressed up for the occasion. But when a man is in pain, when he is suffering from some disease, the doctor sees him in the raw, and the real nature of the man is exposed for anyone who has eyes to see it. We should be inclined to take an intelligent and observant doctor—and all doctors are not either, while very few are both—long before we would take the valuation of a priest who has to fight, first of all his own prejudices, and then to pierce the disguise of his subject.

According to American papers to hand, some of the municipalities are beginning to wonder whether there is no possibility of making Churches and other religious buildings pay their share of the national taxation. We wish them success in the attempt. Such a reform is overdue in this country, but we cannot expect any politician to make a move. It might mean loss of votes, and the conscience of a politician is usually in his seat.

The Rev. Father Owen Dudley, of the Roman Catholic Missionary Society has cleared up a rather vexed point. He explains that a miracle is not a violation of the laws of nature, because when Jesus walked on the water the law of gravity was not violated. Its effect was suspended, so far as Christ's body was concerned, and a greater divine power came into play. Now we quite understand what happened, and we agree that if Jesus walked on the water something like that must have happened.

The General Secretary of the National Church League says that in England "secularism, gambling and drunkenness is growing." This is quite Christian in tone and expression. Suppose we try it and say that drunkenness, gambling, blackguardism and Christian missionary work are increasing in this country. After all, we see no reason why even parsons should enjoy a monopoly of slanderous language.

Holding a Eucharistic Conference in Rio de Janeiro is not without political significance. Most people in Brazil are Roman Catholic, and their newly adopted constitution is definitely in their favour and reactionary. The preceding Constitution was anti-Christian in many of its provisions, but Roman Catholic pertinacity has reversed almost everything against it. Divorce is now prohibited in Brazil—though permitted in nearly all South American countries. Teaching religion in schools, co-operation between Church and State, religious chaplains in hospitals, prisons, barracks, etc., all come back. Even the first words of the document, "The Brazilian people, trusting in God," show its religious tendency. The previous Constitution was framed under the influence of Positivism, but Auguste Comte, in 1934, has to give way to Roman Catholicism at its crudest. What a contrast!

"Religion," says the Rev. John Lendrum, "is not a putting of questions: it is a rejoicing in answers." In other words, religion doesn't "argue" with you, it "tells" you. Mr. Lendrum rightly says that "men do not begin to be religious until they leave off asking questions." He quotes many proofs that Jesus snubbed those who asked questions: "Never you mind," he would say. Mr. Lendrum objects to anybody being inquisitive enough to want to know whether there is any truth in the fiendish idea of eternal punishment without a second chance. "We do not know, and what is more, it looks as if we were not meant to know." Was ever such outrage on reason, or so blind a credulity as this?

"Religion is caught, not taught," was a slogan of the once "Gloomy Dean," now presumably, the gloomy Doctor Inge. Pessimistic indeed he must have been when on one occasion he assured his clergy that "they can give mankind nothing but what they have themselves." Somebody added that "the chance of infection is small in these circumstances."

We are pleased to see that the case of the Fascist who was charged at the Westminster Police Court with punching a man on the nose is creating some attention. It will be remembered that when a car drew up outside the Fascist headquarters, a Fascist punched the driver in the face. Then the puncher found that the punchee was a policeman, and graciously apologized. The magistrate, finding that the Fascist had made a mistake—in punching a policeman, dismissed the case on payment of costs.

The effect of this judgment—unless we restrict the privilege to Fascists—is that anyone may punch a man on the jaw, if he doesn't like the look of him, provided that he is not a policeman. Something really ought to be done about this kind of judgment, unless those in authority wish to make the law ridiculous, and to give point to those who say that it is impossible for a man who is "agin the Government" to get justice done him. We are quite certain that had it been a Freethinker who punched a parson, or a Communist who punched an employer, the result would have been a lecture from the magistrate on the evil of taking the law into one's own hands, and either imprisonment or a heavy fine.

Mr. J. H. Rushbrooke, the well known Baptist, says that the disappearance of religious liberty in various parts of Europe is due to the absence of a large and virile Nonconformity. In general terms we might agree with this, because nonconformity is of the essence of progress. But we rather fancy that Mr. Rushbrooke has in his mind the nonconformity of the different Protestant sects, and that is a different matter. In the light of their conduct, we would revise Mr. Rushbrooke's statement to read the breaking up of Christianity into a number of competing sects makes impossible that general agreement which provides the condition for State intolerance. It is a capital thing that Christians do not agree, but there is no need to thank them for a state of things which, whenever they do agree, they have been the first to prevent.

### Fifty Years Ago

Early Christian Socialism, according to the Acts, was pure Communism, supported by enthusiastic credulity and regulated by a despotic executive that appealed to supernatural terrors when its mandates were disobeyed. Jesus Christ was himself a Communist, and undoubtedly borrowed his doctrine from the Essenes, who practised it with remarkable thoroughness. They had everything in common, and as their wants were bounded by an extreme asceticism and a propitious climate, they were able to maintain their community without much exertion. Jesus himself, as Professor Newman observes, never inculcates industry as a duty. He rather praises idleness and trust in God. "Sell all that thou hast and give unto the poor" was his crowning advice to the young lawyer. "Sell that ye have and give alms," he commanded his disciples. "Give to every one that asketh," was his doctrine in the Sermon on the Mount. Christ's Socialism therefore comes to this—that the rich are to unload for the benefit of the poor who are to depend on such offerings for a living. Could there be a surer and swifter plan for pauperising the world? The only true charity is that which enables a man to help himself. Whether Communism is possible or not on a large scale in any stage of intellectual and moral culture, it is certain that no form of civilized society is compatible with the mawkish sentiment, wild imprudence and systematic laziness which Jesus encouraged. If Christian Socialism then means the Socialism of Jesus Christ, the less we have of it the better. All civilization is a practical protest against it. Industry and foresight are the two great qualities that distinguish the civilized man from the savage. Jesus may have meant well, but his ideas were all astray.

*The "Freethinker," October 26, 1884.*



# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL:

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412

## TO CORRESPONDENTS

C. EVANS.—We have read your letter with interest. Why not try and throw it into the form of a short article, say from a thousand to twelve hundred words?

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—A Horgan (Lugarno), £1. W. J. Lamb, 10s.

FOR Distributing and Advertising the *Freethinker*.—A. Horgan, £1.

J. A. DAVIES.—Sorry our space does not permit a continuation of the topic.

J. CLOUGH.—We should like to advertise in many directions, but people who have control of advertising space require a greater amount of money than we are able to control. We hope the readers of the *Blackburn Methodist* will follow the advice of the Rev. Noel Hutchcroft and read the *Freethinker*, but we have a fancy that the advice is merely rhetorical. We are prepared to send him a quantity for free distribution among his members if he will accept them. But we have our doubts.

S. EMERY.—Pleased you found the "Chasing Shadows" articles so helpful. Mr. Cohen will continue the series with some articles on the belief in the miraculous. It is a subject that can do with restating.

F. SNELLING.—Much obliged, and many thanks. It should be a good lesson to those who so obediently place themselves in the hands of the B.B.C., that is if they are capable of being roused to protest in person against the censorship of Sir John Reith.

J. W. PORTER.—Quite an excellent letter, which shows that you have grasped the essentials of the dispute. Sorry we are so busy at the moment as not to be able to write you at length. But your comments are noted.

A. IRVING.—Thanks for letter. See "Sugar Plums."

A. B. MOSS.—Always pleased to hear from you. Hope the Lord will forego the pleasure of your company for some time yet.

*The "Freethinker" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to this office.*

*The offices of the National Secular Society and the Secular Society Limited, are now at 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Telephone: Central 1357.*

*Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and not to the Editor.*

*The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):— One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.*

*All Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to "The Pioneer Press," and crossed "Midland Bank, Ltd., Clerkenwell Branch."*

## Sugar Plums

To-day (October 28) Mr. Cohen will lecture in the McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow, at 7.0, on the subject of "The Fight for Freedom of Thought." On Monday evening he will be taking part in a public debate with the Rev. Joseph Levine, in the Berkeley Hall, Kent Street, on the question, "Is the Belief in God Reasonable?" Full particulars on page 687.

On the following Sunday (November 4) Mr. Cohen will speak in the Co-operative Hall, Sunderland, at 3 and 7 o'clock. Admission will be free, but there will be some reserved seats. On Monday evening (November 5) he will speak in the Socialist Hall, Royal Arcade, Pilgrim Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne, at 7.0, on "The Case for Freethought."

We do not know when last there was an indoor Freethought meeting in Finchley, but on Sunday, November 11, Mr. Cohen will give an address in the King Edward

Hall, Church End, at 7 o'clock. A large number of advertising slips have been printed, and the General Secretary will be pleased to hear from Freethinkers in North London who will assist in their distribution. A house to house distribution, if it could be arranged, would be helpful.

The *Referee* for October 21 has an interesting article by "Vanoc" on Spinoza, which we hope will result on sending many to the study of one of the world's greatest thinkers. But we also hope that no one will take the following as a correct representation of Spinoza's thought:—

He further established that very important materialist principle—*Matter thinks*. He says that there is only one substance which is at the same time thought and extension. What Spinoza calls substance is identical with matter, and thinking is an attribute of being, of matter.

That is not Spinoza's teaching by a long way. The last thing that Spinoza would have thought or have said is that "matter" thinks. It is dead against his whole philosophy. It is not a question here of right or wrong, but a question of accuracy.

The best way is to put Spinoza's position and leave it at that. Spinoza posits "substance," which may be taken as the equivalent of "Nature," or existence. This existence, or nature, has infinite attributes, of which we know two only: extension which embraces all forms of "matter," and thought which includes all forms of "mind." They are what we should call in present-day science "categories." But Spinoza's substance can by no means be made to stand for matter, which is an attribute of substance. And it is not matter that thinks, Spinoza never said it or hinted it, and the statement is scientifically ridiculous. Extension and thought are with Spinoza, the two attributes under which we apprehend substance. The first gives us "matter," the second "mind." But Spinoza deliberately refuses to substance in itself mental, moral, or ethical qualities. One of the things we should like to find the time to do would be to write a plain exposition of Spinoza's philosophy expressed in modern terms, and with its present-day analogues. But we doubt ever having the time, at least until we can get rid of a great deal of the "donkey-work" we have to do at present. Editing a weekly paper, practically single-handed, is enough to take up all one's time, and there is our other work in addition. So Spinoza must wait.

Last week we called attention to the announcement of the B.B.C. that a reading was to be given from Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*, and its cancellation without either explanation or apology. An old friend asked for an explanation, and this is the official reply:—

We would explain that the decision to make an alteration in the late night reading on October 10 was taken at the wish of the reader, who felt that he could not deliver it with any effect, and consequently it was considered preferable to substitute another extract rather than take the risk of failing to render it satisfactorily.

In the name of the ancient and honourable Association of Religious Liars, we protest against this as a slur on the ability of its members. The picture of a B.B.C. reader being unable to read a passage from Paine because his sensitive nature felt that he could not do Paine justice, is most touching, but very unconvincing. We have frequently complained that the religious liar is very inartistic, but we do not think so meanly of them that they could not have manufactured a better lie than that. The "explanation" that the reader had mislaid his book, or that directly the *Rights of Man* was opened in the studio, a strange unearthly light was seen, and a voice heard protesting against the religious record of the B.B.C. being sullied in such a way, would have been far more convincing. Sir John Reith, who is a "child of the Manse," ought to be able to tell a better tale than that of a man whose devotion to Paine was so great that he felt he could not do the author justice. Clumsy, distinctly clumsy, and not in accord with the best that religion can do in this direction.

*The Two Worlds*, which has always shown a genuine concern for freedom of speech, publishes the following in its issue for October 19:—

Is it not time that the Religious Committee kept its hands off English literature? It already has a stranglehold on the Sunday Broadcasts, but is continually interfering with matters that should not concern it. The B.B.C. is a Government monopoly, and should not be gerrymandered and doctored by a pushful band of self-advertisers out for sectarian propaganda. We have no particular axe to grind in the matter. Thomas Paine was not a Spiritualist; but strings are being pulled at Broadcasting House by persons who are anxious that truth should be suppressed in favour of an obsolete theology. Is it not time such practices ceased? Who will ask a question in the House of Commons?

We are afraid that it is not much use asking Members of Parliament to do much in the matter. To be associated with the name of Thomas Paine promises nothing in the shape of profit.

## New Evidence of Man's Origin

At the beginning of the present century the evidence of man's animal ancestry was still incomplete. Between the ape and Neanderthal Man (probably only a cul-de-sac, a finite twig in the human tree<sup>1</sup>) there were many gaps partly bridged by a few bones of Java Man (the original "missing link").

Subsequent research has corroborated the evolutionary implications by filling in the gaps on both sides of Java Man; that is, between Java Man and Neanderthal Man and the Mousterian savage race; and between Java Man and the chimpanzee; so that, as Prof. A. Keith says, "Could we summon back to the world of to-day all the extinct kinds of man and ape which have flourished and passed away . . . and marshal them in serried ranks according to the respective periods in which they lived, we should have before our eyes an unbroken series of forms, linking the brain of the lowest ape to that of the highest man." (*Darwinism and What it Implies*).

*Pithecanthropus erectus* (Java Man) goes back at least half a million years. Between that and the undisputed apes there is evidence that in the Miocene and early Pliocene periods there were apes with a larger brain than now-existing apes. Two types are named the *Dryopithecus* and *Sivapithecus*. They have been surpassed by the discovery (1924) at Taungs, in Africa, of the skull of an ape, *Australopithecus*, which is much nearer to man than any hitherto known. Whether or not it is a direct ancestor of man is irrelevant. It would be quite adventurous to assert dogmatically that it is, and only writers of the calibre of Mr. Chesterton will take advantage of this. The significance of *Australopithecus* is that it represents a stage in the enlargement of brain and advance of mind, in the steady progress from simian to human level.

Now turn to the other side of Java Man, the human side. Bridging the gap up to Neanderthal various other discoveries have been made. At Mauer, near Heidelberg, a heavy, brutal chinless jaw was found in 1907, nearly 80 feet deep in undisturbed deposits, more human than *Pithecanthropus*, but not so human as Neanderthal Man. This was confirmed a few years later by discoveries at Piltdown (Sussex).<sup>2</sup> Piltdown and Mauer Man are put at about a quarter of a million years ago; a still more recent type are the remains found in Rhodesia<sup>3</sup> in 1922, but the most im-

portant recent discoveries were those a few years ago at Peking, by Prof. Elliott Smith, but the world was too much engrossed by Eddington's revival of free will, Huxley's Atheistic "religion," and such like, to take much notice. As a result of the Peking finds we have to recognize another genus of early man, *Sinanthropus*, almost as ancient as Java Man, and combining his features with those of Piltdown Man.

Other discoveries, seeming to bear the mark of the Pleistocene age have been found in parts of Africa, at Kaman and Kanjera.

The undisputed status of man is that he and the existing apes have evolved from a common ape-like ancestor. Evolution is not just a theory; it is a fact.

It is a fact that has been confirmed by comparative anatomy and physiology. "The short body-hairs, the external ears and their muscles, the fold in the inner corner of each eye, the appendix, the pineal body,<sup>4</sup> the vestigial tail, male milk glands, etc., have had their evolutionary meaning placed beyond dispute." (J. McCabe, *Riddle of the Universe To-day*).

Doubt is sometimes thrown on the argument from embryology—that in embryonic development the individual passes through the series of ancestral forms in an admittedly sketchy<sup>5</sup> recapitulation of its evolution. The theory is, however, given as the settled teaching of science in recent authoritative works like Julian Huxley's *Stream of Life*, J. B. Haldane's *Causes of Evolution*, Prof. Kinsey's *New Introduction to Biology*, Prof. Graham Kerr's *Evolution*, Prof. Gregory's *Evolution of the Face*, and the American symposium *Creation by Evolution*.

But a new line of argument has been opened in Prof. J. B. S. Haldane's *Causes of Evolution*. The mingling of ape and human blood is well known, but Haldane has now shown that at least in another respect the ape is nearer to man than to the lower monkeys. Most mammals, including monkeys, are able to oxidize uric acid and hence escape gout, while the apes share with man the inability to do this. There are "urates"<sup>6</sup> in the blood which are insoluble. Tailed monkeys oxidize them into a soluble substance, *allantoin*, which is taken up and melted like sugar in tea, and excreted, or thrown out, of the body in the normal functioning. This enables monkeys to keep free from gout, in contrast to the tailless apes and men. This argument joins that of the consanguinity of man and the anthropoids; further experiments in blood transfusion have shown that there are the same (four) types of blood in apes as in men.

*Children who Run on All Fours*—another reminiscence of pre-human habits—is the title of a book by Dr. Hrdlicka (1931), who shows that up to eighteen months numbers of normal, healthy children run on all fours. He also confirms the point that new-born babes have exceptional strength in the muscles of the hands and arms, and, by holding on to a stick can sustain the weight of the body.

In these ways, among others, science is filling in the evolutionist, materialist position. The boundary line between man and ape is purely arbitrary. Indeed, many an intelligent ape might have cause to feel insulted at the slander that he is no better than a savage!

G. H. TAYLOR.

<sup>4</sup> Described in the latest edition of Starling's *Physiology* as "a vestigial remnant of a primitive dorsal eye."

<sup>5</sup> Haeckel put forward the theory only with great reserve in *The Evolution of Man*.

<sup>6</sup> A urate is a salt of uric acid.

Conflict lies in the heart of all things, and disagreement is the forerunner of every truth.—*Quondam*.

<sup>1</sup> See *Outline of Science*, symposium, ed. Thomson.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 22 Elliott Smith's *Search for Man's Ancestors* (1931) and Hocart's *Progress of Man* (1933).

<sup>3</sup> See *Coming of Man* (Broom, 1933).

## Birth Control and the Christian Churches

At the 1933 Conference of Modern Churchmen at Cambridge, it was said that:—

... the conscience of humane people was becoming increasingly sensitive to the mass of misery attributable to uncontrolled birth, in the form of ruined home life, miserable childhood, and the wretchedness and fear of multitudes of women. . . . By the side of this . . . an authoritative pronouncement of the Church counts little one way or the other with the modern man of high principles. (*Daily Telegraph*, August 24, 1933.)

Up to the present time the Churches, however much they have disagreed upon points of theology, have always been at one when it came to the question of denying knowledge that would tend to limit the numbers of their followers. They have been unanimous in advising Christians to observe the maximum fecundity ever since they have had an influence over them. Except in rare cases the priests of the various Christian Churches are still advocating large families for their followers; and in the case of those of the Roman Catholic Church they go as far as to intimidate their followers into compliance.

The opening quotation, therefore, is doubly interesting, firstly because it shows that some clergy are capable of talking sense sometimes; and secondly because it is admitted that those who oppose uncontrolled birth on account of the misery it entails are men of high principles. In as much as there are many non-Christians who favour birth-control it is unusual courtesy for a Churchman to refer to them as being high-principled. If pressed, he might have admitted that they are superior even to those many Christians who are so anxious to continue damning the prospects of the poor by opposing the opening of birth-control clinics in working-class districts.

But suppose there were no misery attached to bringing children into the world, it is highly likely that modern men and women of high principle would take exception to the Church's whole attitude to sexuality. The Churches have taught for centuries that women are unclean; that they are the chattels of man and should be obedient and willing to produce his children. It is a point of view which modern women do not endorse, mainly because they frequently find themselves able to prove their superiority to men by contributing the fruits of original thought for the service of humanity besides bearing sons of science. It is, of course, quite beyond the scope of Christian teaching to allow that the mind of women may be equal to the male intellect, but the achievements of women are forcing the Churches to admit the fact, and political force can no longer be exercised to keep women out of whole branches of labour, while woman herself has a much higher ambition than that of becoming the "recreation of the tired warrior," such as is preached by some of the Italian and German leaders.

Wherever women revolt against a state of bondage to men they claim their right to decide whether they shall have children or not. It is a fact which the falling birth-rate clearly demonstrates. But by Church laws they are irrevocably tied to men who may beat them, outrage them or even bring about their premature decease in one way or another unless they appeal to the Civil law for restitution. It is true that the Civil law is quite inadequate to check the grave defects of the Church marriage laws, but even such rights as women have, are, as often as not, unknown to them. Thus, to prevent women having birth-control knowledge and *real* civil rights is the function of

Churches, if Church law were not disputed by men and women of high principles.

There are unmistakable signs that large numbers of people, old and young, have an interest in birth-control which brings them into direct conflict with the Christian Churches. They think it is better for them to know something about sex, rather than put themselves into the hands of God, and remain what the churches call "pure." It is one of the major tragedies of civilization that boys and girls who have had a very religious upbringing, and who have begun to practice self-abuse, often put themselves on the church rack for the rest of their lives, and have their Christian consciences still further twisted in the interests of the Church. One cannot fully estimate the harm which the Churches have done to the morals of the population by distortion and misdirection in their attempts to control and direct the healthy sex urge of the adults under their influence. The existence of so many brothels, the white slave traffic, the sex perversions of adolescence and of mature age, are sufficient to prove that not only have the churches failed to realize even their own standard of "purity"—that might have been anticipated—but that they have added considerably to the "attractiveness," and have helped the perpetuation, of the evils they deplore.

Although the Churches condemn birth-control, do they indiscriminately condemn all those who practise it? If birth-control is contrary to the laws of God, they ought to make an especial appeal to the rich, whose practice of family limitation is notorious, especially if the clergy are genuinely interested in saving souls. Yet they allow the rich to limit their families, and have not the temerity to preach "fecundity" to them. Priests are mainly concerned in denying to the poor the essential knowledge which would help them to reduce the size of their families and thus give them more time to develop themselves and combat the other causes of their degradation and misery—not the least of which are the Christian Churches and their superstitions. Priests unquestionably realize that a poverty-ridden population with its amazing fertility for procreation has little energy and inclination for higher culture, but that it provides a fine broad back for priests to ride on.

The fact that reformers of all kinds have found that where there are large families indescribable exploitation is rampant is good enough reason for them to advocate birth-control. Something of that impression was probably behind the resolution which the Conference of British Labour Women passed by 527 to 6, calling upon the Government in June, 1934 to:—

... take steps to see that birth-control clinics were established by all local authorities to give advice to all persons irrespective of financial position.

(*Daily Herald*, June 23, 1934.)

Excellent though the intention of these women may have been, it seems rather strange that they should ask a Government with whom they had nothing in common politically to limit that part of the population upon which it counts most for its cannon-fodder in the event of future wars. But they did not seem to be aware that the Government had already done a good deal in regard to setting up birth-control clinics. It was the Local Authorities, however, who refused to countenance the Government's schemes so long ago as March and July, 1931. In these months the Ministry of Health issued circulars to Local Authorities embodying schemes for setting up birth-control clinics, and out of 2,000 Local Authorities who received the circulars 1,965 turned the proposals down. It would have been more pertinent for the Conference of British Labour Women to have asked what that decision signified. It meant that the clerical forces

sitting on the various committees set up by the local authorities have decided that there shall be no dissemination of birth-control knowledge in the area under their control. It will doubtless be remembered how the clerical forces in Ealing organized in 1933 to prevent the opening of such a clinic in the Borough of Ealing. If it is not because of a majority of Christian clergy and laymen (who seem to have the time to spare to serve on these committees for safeguarding their vested interests) that birth-control knowledge is not made available, it is because the local councillors are too afraid of the clerical vote in their constituency to voice the vigorous protest which is required to raise such an outrageous embargo.

At the same time as they were twitting the Government, the British Labour Women ought to have asked what their own organization could do to further birth-control knowledge. Why did they not propose to set up their own clinics in districts where they did not already exist? Whilst the "underdog" stew in the unsavoury conditions of the slums; whilst the unemployed are begging for relief from the Public Assistance Committee to feed the children they are still bringing into the world because the clerical-ridden Councils deny them birth-control knowledge; the Trade Unions, one time champions of the "underdog" and hungry to spread the necessary knowledge of family limitation, have ceased to advocate birth-control, mainly because of their alliance with a vote-greedy Labour Party.

The Roman Catholics knew what they were doing when they saw a Labour Party and affiliated Trades Union Congress making a spirited bid to capture political power through a parliamentary majority. It is undoubtedly due to the religious pressure seeking to remove all mention of birth-control from the programmes of the Labour Party and Trades Union Congress amongst other things in exchange for "votes" that birth-control receives no official Labour Party or Trade Union support.

Has not the time come to issue a fresh challenge to those who would deprive the poor of the right to limit their families, and who would retain the existing squalor in which so many working-class women are forced to bring children into the world year after year. The time is overdue, and it is to be hoped that all these people of high principle who want to see this stopped to combine together and by spirited activity in their locality, force the local authorities to supply not only birth-control knowledge, but also the necessary contraceptives to enable working women to establish the right to live.

G. F. GREEN.

### A Very Christian Judge

WHEN George W. Foote was sentenced to prison by a Roman Catholic judge named North, some indignant friends of justice called out in anger: "Scroggs." Scroggs was a bad man, and of course a Christian. But the brutal sentences which made his name infamous were milk-and-water compared with the atrocious cruelties of his immediate successor as Lord Chief Justice of England. I refer to Sir George Jeffreys, more frequently (and more properly) called "Bloody Jeffreys."

Perhaps the most painful reading in literature is the batch of "Dying Speeches" made by many of Jeffreys' victims. Most of these victims were Christians, proscribed by the laws made by their fellow-Christians, persecuted men and women, whose "crimes" consisted in believing the religion of those who tortured them. They split hairs in those days. You could go to an "Established" Church and be respected. You could believe exactly all that the church-goers believed. But you were liable to the same evil-treatment as if you were an Atheist, if you went to an unauthorized church to pray to the

God who seemingly objected to being worshipped in a chapel.

Some of these martyred Dissenters were "Peculiar People" in many ways. Some of them probably solicited martyrdom. This does not in the least degree palliate the crime of laws and judges in condemning to infamous punishment people devoid of all serious offence, whatever their extravagances, where fanatical pietism becomes indistinguishable from monomania.

It ought not in the circumstances to surprise the reader of the frenzied protests against unearned executions, to find Judge Jeffreys frequently accused of being an Atheist. I cannot find elsewhere any repetition of the accusation, and I am quite certain that this is one of the few accusations brought against the sanguinary judge which will not bear investigation.

Judge Jeffreys first came under the King's notice when Charles II. was present in person to witness Jeffreys' handling of those wicked creatures who were issuing a "pirated" copy of a Psalter, and thus were robbing the monarch himself of his copyright fees. Jeffreys could flatter the King even in so prosaic a case as this. "This is a bold fellow," said the King, "I'll warrant him." Thereafter Jeffreys shone always in the royal sunshine. King James recognized his useful snobbery and made him the instrument of his royal vengeance after the Monmouth rebellion.

William Penn, too good a Dissenter to make a mistake on the point, was positive that King James himself was far from wishing the "Bloody Assizes" to be the ghastly horror it was. Penn believed that Jeffreys, in his bitter and admitted hatred of Dissenters, exceeded his instructions whenever Dissenters were before him. It is even possible, as Penn believed, that James's Catholic leanings made him discreetly in favour of a logical toleration embracing both Catholicism and Dissent.

In any case King James deserted his friend when, with much gold, but little courage, the King fled from England to avoid meeting the fate of Charles the First. There is no doubt that Jeffreys' "Bloody Assize" had much to do with the indignation of England, although fear of a Catholic tyranny aroused England to actual revolt. Jeffreys was caught in a low inn at Wapping, disguised as a sailor. He died in the Tower, attended the last by a couple of bishops. He left gold memorial-rings to the bishops and to three other clergymen friends.

At every step in his career, Jeffreys proved his consistent devotion to God, Church and the Christian Creed. His language on the bench was uniformly pious. He was constantly beseeching prisoners. "Once more as a Christian, in the name of the great God of Heaven," he "begged them for their own soul's sake," to plead guilty to crimes they were denying or defending. One Dissenter used the common phrase of his sect: "As I would say if I stood in the presence of God." "Oh," said Jeffreys, "We are all in the presence of the Lord, now and always."

One should read the terrible words of Lord Macaulay to realize the impression Jeffreys left on the pages of history. John Dunton, an eye-witness of the "Bloody Assizes," says, "A certain barbarous joy and pleasure grinned from his brutal soul through his bloody eyes as he sentenced poor souls to death and torture." Lady Lisle, even if guilty was only accused by her worst enemies of sheltering one night a Presbyterian minister, and the evidence was highly dubious. Jeffreys accused her witness Dunne of being an Atheist, bellowing like a bull at Dunne to make him weaken in his defence of the prisoner: "Dost thou not believe in God? God's all-piercing eye looks into the hearts of men." This and much similar Christian exhortation he used—to make a Christian jury convict a Christian woman he was anxious to destroy. Instantly the verdict was given, Jeffreys, like the Fiend of Hell he believed in, sentenced the woman: "To be burnt to death THIS AFTERNOON."

One chronicler quaintly says of Jeffreys, "His Christianity had ever been sincere, but was medieval in its spirit." Medieval or otherwise it was Christian. At the height of his power and influence, Jeffreys was full of Christianity. He never ceased to preach and practice its

very worst features. He hated Dissenters because he was a Christian. He defended Christianity to the end. Almost his last exercise of power was an effort to reconcile King James with the Church of England. His Will, made in the Tower of London, repeats his creed: it refers to "that Church of which I have lived, and die, a member," and with a multitude of pietistic phrases about "being heartily penitent for my sins," he "gives" his miserable trumpery soul to the God who "inspired" his infamies.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

### A Mixed Bag

*Personality: Its Nature, its Operation, and its Development.* By J. Louis Orton. (Thorsons: 5s.)

*The Cure of Stammering, Stuttering, and Other Functional Speech Disorders.* By J. Louis Orton. (Thorsons: 2s. 6d.)

*The Fight: the Organ of the League of Socialist Freethinkers.* (Nos. 1, 2 and 3. (38, Clerkenwell Green, London, E.C.1. 2d. each.)

*Is there a Universe? The Negative Argument.* By David Blair McLachlan. (London; the Golden Vista Press: 2s. 6d.)

*Mrs. Annie Besant; a Modern Prophet.* By Theodore Besterman. (Kegan Paul: 10s. 6d.)

MR. ORTON is by now doubtless well-known to Freethinkers; he is an original without being a crank. All his work is written from a purely and temperately rationalist standpoint.

As this very original author realizes, abstract psychology is mostly nonsense, as essentially silly as "abstract physiology" would be. Abstract psychology is mere verbiage metaphysics, a weary legacy from the barren schoolmen who regarded the soul as a supernatural abstraction, and so insisted upon substituting their limited and specialized erudition for common sense.

Mr. Orton is not a schoolman, but a practical healer, whose nice historic sense enables him to be a sound and—what is much rarer—an amusing Rationalist. This writer is less sound, I think, when he writes—in his chapter on yoga, for instance—from mere hearsay and reading; but, as a whole, *Personality* is the best work on practical psychology that I have seen. In one respect, at least, Mr. Orton is almost unique; he is free from superstition, even scientific superstition.

It is a pleasure to recommend *Personality*; as a gift to the young and enquiring human, it can be suggested as a gift, entirely without reservation. Get it; read it; give it. I can guarantee the buyer against disappointment.

Mr. Orton's little book on stammering is a needed contribution to the arts of speech-clarity and eloquence. Speech and its modes are so dependent ultimately upon neurology, that the Author is unquestionably right in his insistence that here—as elsewhere—surgery has been almost entirely superseded by psychology. To all voice-trainers, -users, and -healers, this little book is invaluable.

Mr. Orton is at his best when he speaks practically; and here he has full chances.

To the all-too-thin ranks of Freethought periodicals, *The Fight* is now to be added.

To the Good Communist Atheism, or "Godlessness," is necessarily the ideal, and, where and when practicable, the inter-state religion; very much as certain Anglicans still tend to regard Christianity as "part and parcel of the law of England."

These early numbers are, of course, tentative and experimental; but they are uncompromisingly hostile to the state-superstitions known as religions. And in this respect they will be welcome to Freethinkers. It must be added, in fairness, that many Freethinkers will demur at accepting wholly the political gospel according to *The Fight*.

This new periodical is written well enough; for among its contributors are the Great Red Hopes, Thomas A.

Jackson and A. L. Morton, who are always belligerent and forthright propagandists.

The *Freethinker* is not a political paper; so the hornet's nest shall remain undisturbed by the gentle and impartial reviewer; but, as was affirmed by G. W. Foote, the first virtue is courage, and the second virtue is courage, and the third virtue is courage. By this standard *The Fight* does not betray its title.

Those possibly-fortunate mortals who, like my unworthy self, love curiosities in print, will be enthralled by Mr. David Blair McLachlan's small but pungent contribution to the Art and Faculty of Metaphysics.

It would be easy to quote from Mr. McLachlan's brochure in order to indulge in a cheap sneer or two. But this would be altogether too cheap a way wherein to treat true transcendentalism.

Here, O brave reader, is a strong Scot who valiantly tries to get to grips with the universe; which is more than most humans ever dream of attempting.

Mr. McLachlan fearlessly arises soaringly into mind-regions whereinto the mere poet-critic finds it all-but-impossible to follow; but that, after all, may be the poet-critic's fault. Not all achievements are possible to us all. To quote Browning, other heights in other lives, God willing. This is to be understood, if necessary, in a purely Pickwickian sense; so let no ardent heretic admonish me.

There are phrases in Mr. McLachlan's treatise that any good Freethinker will approve. Here is an example:—

Theistic mystical literature is hard to understand. To be joined to God is supposed to excuse any extravagance and obscurity of language.

Mr. McLachlan is an ardent and erudite anti-religionist and anti-clerical. Mysticism is defined, in Hastings' Encyclopædia, as *Union with God*, "which to me is a senseless expression." It must be, of course, until "God," that elusive (though omnipresent) priestprop, be defined.

The author writes the purest secularism when he affirms:—

Law and order are best left to educated common sense. People can be virtuous without being intellectual cranks. There is nothing more reasonable than morality. No supernatural sanction is necessary. Life is a game of which law and morality are the rules. Immorality is dishonourable play. It is not "cricket."

Here is another sentence, plucked at random: "Ireland has never had a day's peace since it became Christian."

To those Freethinkers who, like myself, find an interest in Celtic Fairylore, Stonehenge, Druidry, and esoteric speculations, this small work will be treasure-trove; but to the orthodox—even the orthodox Freethinker—it will merely be irritating. The writer is an original thinker; he may be a crank, but his mind is extremely well-oiled.

For more than one reason the Freethinker will find Mr. Besterman's study of Annie Besant of intense interest. Here is one of the most changeable human lives ever lived; recorded by a kindly, tolerant, and impartial historian.

Annie Besant was one of the greatest followers that the world has known; her character was a mixture of originality and devotion; of inconsistency and courage; she was at once reactionary and pioneer.

Mrs. Besant's later career was foretold with almost uncanny accuracy by the shrewd and downright Foote, when she broke finally with Freethought. She never forgave her critic, possibly because, unconsciously to herself, she may have realized—and bitterly realized—his correctness.

Malthusianism, Socialism, Atheism, Freethought, she abandoned; almost suddenly. She became the prey of the doubtfully-wise and omniscience-claiming pundits of the Theosophical Society. Madame Blavatsky, herself a thorough and courageous heretic, was among other things a resolute anticlerical. When she passed-out, Annie Besant, after innumerable scuffles, gained the headship of the Theosophical Society, and soon after

that began coquetting with organized religion, and incubating a future "saviour," who did not "come off."

In this tragic and farcical situation there is a photograph of the former sub-editor of the *National Reformer*, surrounded by priests of the Liberal Catholic Church. Annie Besant continued to betray the principles of the Theosophical Society by trying to attach it to "religion."

It is not wonderful that the High Priestess of Neo-Theosophy should claim the ability to recall her past incarnations for something over seventy thousand years.

Yet—yet—in her day of mind and of strength, Annie Besant did as good work for Progress as was ever accomplished by woman. Remembering this, it is easy to forgive, and even to understand, the lapsing into reaction and supercredulity. In her heyday, Annie Besant was a Freethinker. No Freethinker will fail to enjoy Mr. Besterman's fascinating and modest book, which is a masterpiece in the art of concentrated biography.

VICTOR B. NEUBURG.

### Correspondence

MR. COHEN AT MANCHESTER

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The reference ("Sugar Plums," *Freethinker*, October 21) to the attendance at Mr. Cohen's meeting in Manchester on the 14th, whilst substantially correct, is liable to create a wrong impression.

The attendance was as high as on any previous occasion, with the exception of the "Bradlaugh" Centenary meeting twelve months ago, and was certainly almost double that of any meeting (prior to the "Bradlaugh" Centenary) held in the last ten years.

There were few vacant seats, and but for the inclement weather there is no doubt that every seat would have been occupied and many turned away.

On the night of the Bradlaugh meeting, and also on the occasion of Mr. Cohen's last visit to Manchester in March, we had dry weather which is always a material factor in providing a good gathering.

WM. COLLINS.

### RELIGION AND SUFFERING

SIR,—It seems to one reader that in your desire to be fair all round, your Editorial in Oct. 21 issue scarcely lays sufficient emphasis upon the evils, the long tale of terrible suffering, individual, racial, national, and also of misplaced wasted energy, for which religions have been, and in some cases still are, directly responsible, and which but for religion and the conflicts it raises, need never have formed part of human history.

The belief in supernaturalism which in its crudest or cultured forms is the ground-work of any creed definite enough to serve as religion, provided the strong man, whether scorcerer, medicine-man, or priest with weapons which made their position in a credulous world practically impregnable, and secured for them the backing of the powers and principalities of their times. Now the times have changed and religion has to stand upon and be judged by its own merits, apart from the external support of force.

Another point is that the evils for which religion was directly responsible, were always at their worst when faith was most fervent!

The positive evils associated with religion are fading before the growth of science and historical criticism, although some intrepid philosophical scientists are doing their best to efface them from the religious picture, and to relegate them, in the company of many secular evils, to the limbo of ancient history. But the light thrown upon religion by the crimes committed under its cloak, burns as brightly as ever, and some of its beams shine on the pages of Miss Helen Waddell's recent book, *Peter Abelard*.

MAUD SIMON.

### SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

Lecture notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4 by the first post on Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

#### LONDON.

##### OUTDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Sunday, October 28, Mr. Campbell Everden. Highbury Corner, 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury. South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Monday, October 29, Mr. Campbell Everden. Highbury Corner, 8.0, Thursday, November 1, Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.30, Sunday, Mr. W. B. Collins. 3.30, Messrs. Wood, Bryant, Collins and Tuson. 6.30, Mr. Wood (W.P.). Wednesday, 7.30, Messrs. Wood, Bryant, Collins and Tuson. *Freethinker* on sale outside Park gates, and literature to order.

##### INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, S. K. Ratcliffe—"Some Impressions of Scandinavia."

STUDY CIRCLE (63 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4): 8.0, Mr. P. Goldman—"The Interpretations of Dreams in the Light of Psycho-Analysis."

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Conway Hall, 49 Theobalds Road, W.C.): 7.0, Mrs. E. A. Hornibrook—"Reasons for Birth-Control."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. ("The Laurie Arms," Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, R. H. Rosetti—"Dictators, People and Persecution."

#### COUNTRY.

##### INDOOR.

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Boilermakers' Hall, Argyle Street, Birkenhead, opposite Scala Cinema, entrance in Lorn Street): 7.0, F. C. Moore, M.A.—"Religion and the Menace of War."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Bristol Street Schools): 7.0, Mr. H. W. Cottingham—"What is Sin?"

ROGGERHAM (I.L.P.): 2.45, Mr. J. Clayton.

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Godwin Commercial Hotel, Godwin Street): 7.0, Mr. W. Leach—"Religion the Ruin of India."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. Arthur Holden (Burnley)—"The Road from Rome to Reason."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (McLellan Galleries, 270 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Chapman Cohen—"The Fight for Freedom of Thought."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Milton Hall, 12a Daulby Street, Liverpool, off London Road, by the Majestic Cinema): 7.0, A. D. McLaren (London)—"The Organization of Stupidity."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Clarion Cafe, Market Street, Manchester): 7.0, Sam Cohen (Manchester)—"Watchman, What of the Night?"

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Plymouth Chambers, Drake Circus): 7.0, Mr. Matthews—"Materialism."

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Green Street): 7.0, Mr. Allan Flanders—"Freethought and the Municipal Elections."

### TO ALL NEWCOMERS.

If you are not a regular subscriber and would like to test the quality of the *Freethinker* for the next four weeks, free of charge, please sign and post this form:—

Please send me, post free, the *Freethinker* for the next four weeks. The sending of the paper does not place me under any obligation whatever.

Name .....

Address .....

.....

To the *Freethinker*, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S.

# A PUBLIC DEBATE

IN THE  
**BERKELEY HALL, KENT ST.**

ON  
**MONDAY, OCTOBER 29TH**

SUBJECT  
**'Is the Belief in God Reasonable?'**

*Affirmative* : REV. JOSEPH LEVINE, B.A.

*Negative* : CHAPMAN COHEN

*Chairman* : E. ROSSLYN MITCHELL, LL.B.

Tickets from Grant's Educational Company, Mrs. Macdonald, 149 Stanmore Road, Mt. Florida, The Progressive Synagogue, Queen's Drive, Queen's Park, or at the Berkeley Hall on the night of the meeting.

Doors Open 6.30. Commence 7.30. Tickets 6d. and 1s.

# THE OTHER SIDE OF DEATH

By **CHAPMAN COHEN.**

**Cloth Bound THREE SHILLINGS & SIXPENCE**  
Postage 2d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

# PRIESTCRAFT

BY

**C. R. BOYD FREEMAN**

Cloth 6s. Postage 3d.

# ACADEMY CINEMA,

Oxford Street. Ger. 2981

FRITZ LANG'S

"DR. MABUSE" (A) and

"MAEDCHEN IN UNIFORM" (A)

# UNWANTED CHILDREN

In a Civilized Community there should be no UNWANTED Children.

An Illustrated Descriptive List (68 pages) of Birth Control Requisites and Books sent post free for a 1½d. stamp.

N.B.—PRICES ARE NOW LOWER.

**J. R. HOLMES, East Hanney, Wantage, Berks.**

ESTABLISHED NEARLY HALF A CENTURY.

# NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

President - - - **CHAPMAN COHEN.**

General Secretary - **R. H. ROSETTI.**

68 FARRINGDON STREET, LONDON, E.C. 4.

THE National Secular Society was founded in 1866 by Charles Bradlaugh. He remained its President until shortly before his death, and the N.S.S. has never ceased to live up to the tradition of "Thorough" which Bradlaugh by his life so brilliantly exemplified.

The N.S.S. is the only organization of militant Freethinkers in this country. It aims to bring into one body all those who believe the religions of the world to be based on error, and to be a source of injury to the best interests of Society. It claims that all political laws and moral rules should be based upon purely secular considerations. It is without sectarian aims or party affiliations.

If you appreciate the work that Bradlaugh did, if you admire the ideals for which he lived and fought, it is not enough merely to admire. The need for action and combined effort is as great to-day as ever. You can best help by filling up the attached form and joining the Society founded by Bradlaugh.

### PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS.

**S**ECULARISM teaches that conduct should be based on reason and knowledge. It knows nothing of divine guidance or interference; it excludes supernatural hopes and fears; it regards happiness as man's proper aim, and utility as his moral guide.

Secularism affirms that Progress is only possible through Liberty, which is at once a right and a duty; and therefore seeks to remove every barrier to the fullest equal freedom of thought, action, and speech.

Secularism declares that theology is condemned by reason as superstitious, and by experience as mischievous, and assails it as the historic enemy of Progress.

Secularism accordingly seeks to dispel superstition; to spread education; to disestablish religion; to rationalize morality; to promote peace; to dignify labour; to extend material well-being; and to realize the self-government of the people.

The Funds of the National Secular Society are legally secured by Trust Deed. The trustees are the President, Treasurer and Secretary of the Society, with two others appointed by the Executive. There is thus the fullest possible guarantee for the proper expenditure of whatever funds the Society has at its disposal.

The following is a quite sufficient form for anyone who desires to benefit the Society by legacy:—

I hereby give and bequeath (*Here insert particulars of legacy*), free of all death duties, to the Trustees of the National Secular Society for all or any of the purposes of the Trust Deed of the said Society.

### MEMBERSHIP.

Any person is eligible as a member on signing the following declaration:—

I desire to join the National Secular Society, and I pledge myself, if admitted as a member, to co-operate in promoting its objects.

Name .....

Address .....

Occupation .....

Dated this.....day of.....19...

This declaration should be transmitted to the Secretary with a subscription.

P.S.—Beyond a minimum of Two Shillings per year, every member is left to fix his own subscription according to his means and interest in the cause.

NOW READY

THE  
**Rationalist Annual 1935**

**PROFESSOR SIR ARTHUR KEITH**  
 (THE ORDEAL OF ERNST HAECKEL)

**PROFESSOR J. B. S. HALDANE**  
 (DARWINISM UNDER REVISION)

**PROFESSOR H. J. LASKI**  
 (THE NEXT PHASE OF RATIONALISM)

**SIR JOHN HAMMERTON**  
 ("THAT VAST FOREVER")

**SIR GRAFTON ELLIOT SMITH**  
 (THE ARYAN QUESTION)

**C. E. M. JOAD**  
 (THE CHALLENGE TO REASON)

**MR. LOUIS GOLDING**  
 (CONVERSATIONS WITH A GHOST)

**SIR A. G. CARDEW**  
 (THE VIRGIN BIRTH)

**MR. LLEWELYN POWYS**  
 (THE DAWN BREAKERS)

**A. GOWANS WHYTE**  
 (THE PAINTED WOMAN)

**ERNEST THURTLÉ**  
 (THOUGHTS ON BELIEF AND CONDUCT)

**Paper cover, 1s. net**  
 (by post 1s. 2d.)

**Cloth, 2s. 6d. net**  
 (by post 2s. 9d.)

### Aspects of Dialectical Materialism

By Prof. H. LEVY, Prof. JOHN MACMURRAY, RALPH FOX, R. PAGE ARNOT, J. D. BERNAL, and E. F. CARRITT.  
*Cloth, 5s. net, by post 5s. 5d.*

"The subject of this book is really extraordinarily topical and vital. So much so that this work can be confidently recommended to every conscientious thinking person."—*Edinburgh Evening News*.

### The Web of Thought and Action

**An Experiment in Philosophy.** By Prof. H. LEVY, and Others.  
*Cloth, 7s. 6d. net, by post 8s.*

A comprehensive social analysis, embracing Science, Philosophy, Arts, and Religion, elaborated from a widely-acclaimed Broadcast series.

### Liberty To-day

By C. E. M. JOAD. *Cloth, 2s. 6d. net, by post 2s. 10d.*

"Worth more than the modest half-crown charged for it.....Mr. Joad is conscientiously fair and temperate, and throughout he appeals solely to reason."—*Sunday Times*.

### Crime: Its Cause and Treatment

By CLARENCE DARROW.  
*Cloth, 2s. 6d. net, by post 2s. 10d.*

Herein is the result of a lifetime of observation by this well-known lawyer of behaviour as manifested in crime.

### The Riddle of the Universe To-day

By JOSEPH McCABE. *Cloth, 5s. net, by post 5s. 6d.*

"Mr. McCabe's book.....should do a deal towards pricking the bubbles that are constantly being blown by religiously-minded scientists."—*Freethinker*.

### Modern Knowledge and Old Beliefs

By VIVIAN PHELIPS. *Library Edition, 2s. 6d. net, by post 2s. 9d.; paper cover, 1s. net, by post 1s. 3d.*

"A work of great interest and importance and one which challenges the Christian tradition."—*School Government Chronicle*.

### Scientific Research and Social Needs

By JULIAN HUXLEY. *Cloth, 7s. 6d. net, by post 8s.*

"Undoubtedly a book of considerable importance..... a work which should be read by all who prefer truth to volubility."—*Sheffield Daily Telegraph*.

### Theism Found Wanting

By W. S. GODFREY. *Cloth, 2s. 6d. net, by post 2s. 10d.; paper cover, 1s. 6d. net, by post 1s. 8d.*

"Deals with a controversial subject in telling fashion."—*Edinburgh Evening News*.

### Lectures and Essays

By R. G. INGERSOLL. *In three series, price 1s. net each, by post 1s. 2d. The three series, elegantly bound in one volume, in imitation half calf, with gilt top, 4s. 6d. net, by post 5s.; paper cover, 2s. 6d. net, by post 3s.*

### A Martian Examines Christianity

By ARTHUR LEVETT. *Cloth, 2s. 6d. net, by post 2s. 10d.; paper cover, 1s. net, by post 1s. 2d.*

A bird's-eye view of the Christian religion.

### THINKER'S LIBRARY

*Each clothette, 1s. net, by post 1s. 3d.*

### The Mind in the Making

By JAMES HARVEY ROBINSON.

In this "cardinal book," as H. G. Wells describes it, the history of human thought is outlined and the principles of freedom and progress brilliantly vindicated.

### The Expression of the Emotions

in Man and Animals

By CHARLES DARWIN. Revised and abridged by Surg. Rear-Admiral C. M. BEADNELL.

This fascinating book brims over with everyday testimony of the kinship between man and animals.

OF ALL BOOKSELLERS

Copy of "The Literary Guide" (monthly; 3d.) free to all applicants, with complete Catalogue

**WATTS & CO.,**

5 & 6 JOHNSON'S COURT, FLEET STREET, LONDON, E.C.4