

# THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED *by* CHAPMAN COHEN •

— Founded 1881 —

VOL. LVI.—No. 43

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25, 1936

PRICE THREEPENCE

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Views and Opinions

**Thinking Christian**

IN one of his book reviews, dealing, I think, with a critical work on the Bible, the late G. K. Chesterton remarked that the fault of many anti-Christian critics was that they were too Christian in their criticism. Very often Mr. Chesterton's criticisms were "perky," rather than profound; they partook too much of that perkiness which young cockneys—and old ones that have failed to grow up—mistake for intelligence; but in this case he did note a very decided fault in much anti-Christian criticism. But the fault was one that helped Mr. Chesterton in his religious advocacy, and he always took care to steer clear of those anti-Christian critics who dealt with his religious faith in completely uncompromising fashion. He preferred, as other Christians prefer, to enter into controversy with such as weakened their attack by having sentimental attachments to the old creed, or who did not themselves see the nature of the question at issue. The anti-Christian who accepts all the Christian scale of values, or who believes that there was really a great reformer behind the mythology of the New Testament, or who argues with one eye on his many Christian friends, and values their opinion of him, rather than thinking of his own private opinion of them, is easy meat for the nimble and not too scrupulously honest Christian apologist. And as in most cases ardent anti-Christians are often those who have themselves been equally ardent believers, it is almost too much to expect that these should be quite free from the influence of their early creed. If they had believed less earnestly, they would not have disbelieved with so much fervour. But the strength of the fervour of belief acts, in most cases, as a drag which prevents their reaching the uplands across which blows the strengthening air of pure Free-thought. There is always something of the past thinking in present thought, and when this is accom- panied by family and other intimate relationships the

drag of the past is too strong for one to expect quite unprejudiced thinking.

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**Missing the Issue**

IN most of the cases that Mr Chesterton had in mind, the presumed anti-Christians not merely adopted the Christian scale of moral values, but actually took the statement of their own case as the Christian laid it down. I remember, for example, one particular instance in which Mr. Chesterton and a number of others met on the stage of a West-end theatre to discuss the question of miracles. The question at issue was whether miracles occurred or not. But the question they discussed was whether there was sufficient evidence for miracles. And Mr. Chesterton and his supporters had it nearly all their own way. If certain miracles were rejected Mr. Chesterton might agree with the rejection in case after case without losing his position. He would agree that certain alleged miracles could not be placed on an evidential basis. The Roman Catholic Church would agree with this, and it actually does have some official enquiry as to the evidence before accepting certain miracles, and may reject some as imaginary without weakening its position. No one can disprove the possibility of miracles merely by arguing that there is not enough evidence to warrant belief in any particular miracles. And once grant the possibility of miracles and the Christian has won half the battle. Mr. Chesterton and his followers had got the simple-minded disbelievers where they wanted them. As he would have said, they were thinking Christian while professing to be disbelievers in Christianity. One might as well shy snowballs at an iceberg in the hope of melting it, as hope to disprove miracles on that line.

If miracles were never established by evidence—and if they were the Freethinker's case is demolished at the outset—what is the use of discussing whether there is evidence enough to prove a miracle? There is not a single miracle told of Jesus Christ that has not been told of others, and in every case conditions of belief were identical. The question for the Free-thinker to discuss is not whether there is evidence enough to establish a miracle, but what are the conditions that lead people to believe in miracles, which is also an indication of the conditions that lead them to disbelieve. Grant the possibility of miracles, and the Freethinker has nothing to offer but the mildest of doubts concerning any miracle that may be proffered for his acceptance. Short of an indiscriminate acceptance of miracles, the Christian can ask for nothing more.

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**Goodness and God**

Take another example. The idea of God has nothing whatever to do with whether the God that is assumed to exist is bad or good. As a matter of fact

most gods have been anything but good, and to the believer in one god the other gods have been of a very queer character. Those who are acquainted with religious controversy will know how often it was stressed that if there be a God he must at least be as good as man. But the questions of the existence of God and the goodness of God are quite distinct, and the Christian might well have met the Atheist with the retort, "All your talk about whether God is good or not is beside the mark. My position rests on the existence of God, yours on the negation of that belief. In talking of the character of God you are granting me all I require." The Atheist had allowed himself to be bemused by the Christian talk of the goodness of God. He was thinking Christian.

Many of my readers will recall the fact that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Deists were arguing against the Bible God, and in favour of a God of nature on the ground that the God of the Bible was partial, vengeful and cruel. But, after all, said Bishop Butler, if there is a God of nature, as you admit, and if as we Christians hold, that God gave us a revelation in the Bible, then, if the God of nature is also the God of revelation, we should expect to find the same characteristics in both. So Butler took the God of the Deists and showed them that the same characteristics belong to both. Nature was vengeful, cruel, and so forth, and any reason that existed for rejecting the God of the Bible existed also for rejecting the god of nature. The answer was conclusive. There was as much reason for believing in one as there was for believing in the other—and *there was an equal reason for disbelieving in both.* The way out was through Atheism; and no single person did more during that period to develop Atheism in this country at that time than Bishop Butler. The Deists were really thinking Christian. Butler had reminded them of the fact without knowing it.

There is a very striking illustration of this hang-over in the mentality of many who believe themselves to be fully emancipated. The early Christians did not bother very much about right conduct, but they did about right belief, and that belief was right which saved their souls. But as belief in Jesus, the God incarnate, weakened, the belief in Jesus as a great moral teacher developed. And when a knowledge of comparative mythology made it quite clear that there was no more reality in the New Testament Jesus Christ than in scores of other saviour gods, the logical step would have been to have dropped Jesus Christ altogether. But numbers of disbelievers in the god fell back upon the man, and large numbers of disbelievers in the god to-day profess to believe in the man. They still profess belief in the existence of a good man around whom the mythological stories gathered, forgetting that without the mythology Jesus is not worth a row of pins to the Churches of Christendom. They know, or if they do not know, may easily know, that there is not a single shred of moral teaching put into the mouth of the New Testament character that cannot be found either in the Old Testament or in the Jewish Rabbinical writings, and that these were mere commonplaces to the Jews of nearly two thousand years ago. As Chesterton would have said, they are still thinking Christian. They profess beliefs that are quite reasonable in the mouth of a believer, but are downright nonsense when uttered by an avowed Freethinker.

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#### Evolution and Religion

I have room for but one further illustration, although one might set down enough examples to fill a volume. To-day we are all familiar with the theory of evolution. We are so familiar with it that

few try to really understand it. And from the popularization of the conception of evolution in the latter half of the last century, it has been common to find all sorts of people adulterating the theory of evolution with ideas that are survivals of their religious period. There were those who put in a plea for evolution on the ground that it produced a "higher" form of life, or that evolution was on the side of morality, which led naturally to some idea of a "purpose" running through evolution, and so on to the nebulous, wishy-washy, ghost-like Theism of Eddington and Jeans. All these people were talking science, or ethics, or sociology and thinking religion. They were like animals that had suddenly developed the upright position but insisted on going round on all-fours. Myriads of people would not take advantage of thinking scientifically, and lived in an environment where they could not think genuine religion.

For evolution, as a scientific description of natural processes has nothing to do with "higher" or "lower," or with ethical development. Despite Darwin's own phrase, apart from our personal predilections, there is nothing "grander" in things being created as they are, or getting where they are after millions of years of development. There is nothing "higher" in a man when contrasted with a cow, than there is with a cow when contrasted with a man. A Prime Minister is not higher than a crocodile; considered as natural products, they are simply different from each other. If we care to call the product of one set of circumstances "higher" than another, we may do so. That is our business, but we must not saddle nature with our own egotism. An ape examining mankind might, with equal scientific accuracy, consider man as a curious variation from the true simian type, and treat it as a case of degeneracy.

The human mind does not definitely and completely throw off its pre-scientific characteristics directly man reaches a definitely scientific stage. Rudimentary mental forms are as common as rudimentary physical structures, and far more dangerous in their operations. In the main the rudimentary physical reminders of our animal origin do not seriously interfere with bodily adjustments; but the primitive mental forms that are imbedded in our language, that are buttressed by institutions and sanctified by custom, keep man on a lower level than he might otherwise be. Winwood Reade expressed this dramatically when he said that we had tailed minds as well as tailed bodies. We talk science and we think religion, or we move in fear of the ghosts we think we have discarded. The scientist traces a purpose in a world in which no such thing exists. The politician and the historian is found declaiming about the "destiny" of a nation to do this or that, and is unconscious that he is voicing a plain survival of the time when laws were derived from some god who had visited the earth. And even a professed Atheist may sometimes be found indignantly repudiating the idea that he should have been accused of speaking disrespectfully of God. Certainly we have tailed minds, and need to be constantly on guard to prevent the tail wagging in an ostentatious manner.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Many writers seem to imply that family affection of any sort was as foreign to pre-Christian life as a knowledge of modern astronomy, whereas the evidence of all classical literature and of monumental inscriptions suffices to show that in this respect human nature was precisely the same 2000 years ago as it is to-day.

J. A. Farrer.

## Faith's Fetish Book

"Liberty's chief foe is theology."—Bradlaugh.

"Solemnity is of the essence of imposture."

Shaftesbury.

THE average Christian knows very little about his own religion, and practically nothing whatever concerning other forms of faith. Although there are many "Sacred Books" in the world, Christians innocently persist in regarding their own fetish-book as the only pebble on the beach. This parlous state of affairs proceeds from the strict priestly control of education, which has resulted in a semi-literate democracy. According to priests, their revelation is the opposite of reason, and reason must bow in submission before divine oracles without presuming to understand them. So far as this country is concerned, the priests kept the population as ignorant as they dared. As late as 1870 half the people were really illiterate and the State was compelled to enforce Free Education for all. Even to-day the vast majority is only half-educated, and were it not for Freethought and Socialist lecturers and publications many people would be oblivious to the truth concerning the various religions and serious politics.

The "glorious free press" actually helps Priestcraft, which it regards as representing a huge vested interest like the coal-industry or the drink traffic, and therefore entitled to the respect commanded by big business. On the occasion of the four-hundredth anniversary of the burning of William Tindale, the journalists paraded their ignorance and their prejudice. Tindale was one of the early translators into English of the Christian Bible, therefore the journalists belauded this Bible, and made a fine mess in so doing. Some hailed the so-called sacred work as the brightest jewel of England's literature; others professed to regard it as the source of England's greatness; all chanted in unison: "Holy Bible, book divine." The articles and references were so silly as to be contemptible. Nothing could more decisively show the depth of ineptitude to which the modern press has descended in its search for myriads of readers and advertisers.

The claim that the Christian Bible is the crown of England's literature is fantastic nonsense. The so-called "sacred" volume is Oriental, just as much as is *The Arabian Nights*. It is not a single work emanating from one mind, but a two-fold collection of literature, as widely separated as Ancient Hebrew and Greek of the later period. There are in this single volume no less than 66 books, divided into two groups, one of 39, and the other of 27. They include a very wide range of subjects, from narratives of the wars of the Jews, poems, legends, fragments of history, proverbs, mythological invention and borrowings, all pieced together, and not too skilfully. The story of Creation was borrowed from the Chaldeans, the ten commandments has a curious analogy to the confession in the "Book of the Dead." Even the rite of circumcision was adopted from the Egyptians, as well as numerous ceremonies and symbols. As for the so-called New Testament, the printed "gospels" are but the residue of many other similar imaginative writings. Attributed to each of the "twelve disciples," one was inscribed to "Judas." There was a gospel to the Hebrews, another of the Egyptians. There were evangels of Childhood, of Perfection and of Mary. These primitive memoirs were supposed to be based on oral accounts of events long anterior. The earlier Hebrew portion is limited by the narrow horizon of a very small nation. The later part is vitiated by the un-

controlled imagination of the anonymous writers, and by the absence of authoritative historical corroboration. What has all this Salmagundi of Orientalism to do with the home-grown literature of England? It is an alien importation, and, had it not been associated with a heavily endowed system of Priestcraft, would have been, by this time, forgotten.

One newspaper pretended to see something supernatural in the enormous publicity of the Christian Bible. The writer overlooks the fact that the book enjoys State support, and copies are compulsorily used in education; and also in law courts and police courts as a fetish-book for swearing upon. A copy on my own shelves contains the stamp of an Asylum for Idiots, to whose warped intelligences it was doubtless considered suitable. In the World War (1914-18) hundreds of thousands of copies were sent to the back of the fighting lines by paid propagandist societies, and the leaves of some were used for making cigarettes and for shaving paper. In my younger days Family Bibles were displayed in front windows of houses, usually surmounted by a flower-pot, and the plant received more attention than the book.

And what of the numerous Bible Societies? They have annual incomes running into tens of thousands of pounds, and they must distribute or default. It is a business, for the colporteurs actually sell copies. They are the bagmen of faith. As for special editions of parts of the Christian Scriptures, so industriously advertised, what does it all amount to? Whilst the Eskimauts, the African pygmies, the Maoris, and the head-hunters of Borneo may have the rare privilege of handling a book they cannot read, Britishers at home are fast losing interest in the "old, old story." A few generations of really secular education, and the last Christian may be embalmed for exhibition in the British Museum, alongside the mummies of Ancient Egypt.

William Tindale, a brave and a good man, was not burnt at the stake because he translated this Bible into the vernacular, as the journalists pretend. It was because he had attacked the Romish Church. In book after book he told the priests that they were "half-men," and a lot more plain, but unpalatable truths, especially with regard to their greed for temporal power. And priests, like the Bourbons, "learn nothing and forget nothing."

"East is East, and West is West," and nowhere is this more true than in the case of the heterogeneous scrap-book, known as the Christian Bible. All is grist that comes to the priestly mill. Legends, love-poems, faked genealogies, prehistoric fragments, wholesale borrowings from other religions, dialectics, even a collection of proverbial phrases, are all joined together to make the jig-saw puzzle of Christian theology. Should a Hebrew poet sigh that his beloved's mouth is "like a thread of scarlet"; should a Semitic writer recapture in sugary language the perfumes of Sharon and Lebanon, and the atmosphere of ancient Palestine; it is all forced by priests into a sinister record of humanity's downfall.

Let there be no mistake on this point. The Christian priest instructs the man in the pew as if this Biblical hotch-potch was written yesterday, and the lying legends but the facts of "late night, final" journalism. The priest tells the congregation that this sacred book is literally true from cover to cover, including the lick-spittle eulogy of King James the First, and, like a conjuror producing rabbits from a hat, evolves the most ridiculous theories. Listen to the priestly charlatan telling his flock that an almighty maker of all things placed the first man and woman in a garden, and for a paltry crime of petty larceny punished them both with death, and visited

their small crime on all mankind, whose everlasting fate will be determined at an awful judgment day. The priest also says that mankind became so monstrously wicked that the same kind-hearted Almighty drowned them all, except eight persons, like kittens in a pail. Afterwards this same Almighty became the war-lord of the Hebrews, who were his chosen people, although he could not always help them to victory. And so on, and so forth, until the divine comedy reaches a climax, and the Almighty is put to death to appease himself.

This farrago of theological nonsense is built from a foundation which consists of a volume of Oriental miscellanies. With this slender outfit, combined with a colossal impudence, priests have extracted thousands of millions of money from their fellow-men. Although they are the sorriest of all charlatans, they have usurped a position in society which has not only rivalled that of Kings, Emperors, and Dictators, but in many cases surpassed them. The thing could never have happened at all but for the innocence and sheer incompetence of the ordinary man. It is precisely here that the priests displayed their greatest cunning, for by their control of education they saw to it that the ordinary citizen was kept in ignorance, and could not therefore check the priestly abracadabra. For this the unhappy farmer has paid priests ten per cent on his produce; for this ground-rents and coal-royalties have been levied. For this have men and women been bullied on their death-beds. For this all opposition was quelled by torture and death in the days of faith. Is it not time that priests were made to get their living honestly?

This book, by which an impudent set of impostors have been gaining an easy living these two thousand years, is remarkable in one respect. It contains more false statements than any other so-called sacred volume. It starts with a lie and finishes with a nightmare. The remainder is a wilderness of riotous, exuberant Oriental imagination, no more truthful than *The Arabian Nights*, and no more reliable than a last year's railway time-table.

MIMNERMUS.

## Appleton's Inferno

AND OTHER GRIM FAIRY TALES

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UNTIL quite recently, the inventing of hells has remained the exclusive and jealously guarded privilege of hierophants and other traders in eschatological pish-posh. And even in these days of pagan enlightenment we continue to be entertained by their glowing accounts of torrid Things To Come. The reason is not far to seek. To the charlatans who so desperately strive to perpetuate these pious frauds, such a threatened warm welcome is an essential feature of their gloomy ponerology—hence the puerile solemnity with which it continues to be invoked against all who temerously thumb the nose at their bogus thaumaturgy. A humble, truth-seeking Agnostic myself—i.e., an infidel, an unbeliever, a pagan, a barbarian, an utter scoundrel, a godless renegade (once a near-octogenarian virgin, so-called, publicly denounced me as the Devil himself in terrestrial disguise, commanding me the while to get me behind her!)—I have been the subject of every zany rite of anathematization ever heard of. In all, my supposedly wayward, hypothetical soul has been earmarked for somewhat prolonged spells—ranging from a mere 21 days to

duration, ever and ever, and all eternity—in no less than 153 of the better class centrally-heated hells, irradiant infernos, and picturesque purgatories which, it has long been affirmed, infest the interior of This Ball. My promised *post-mortem* itinerary includes such well known thermal regions as Gehenna, Erebus, Hamistagan, Sanjiva, Drujo-demana, Kalasutta, Samghata, Roruva, Tapana, Avichi, Pratapana, to name but a few. Nevertheless, I still don't believe that Jonah swallowed the beluga, or that the burning of tortoise fat causes storms, or that Zoroaster's seed ever floated on a sacred lake, or that an amorous prakriti ever pursued, to her undying shame and everlasting disgrace, a reluctant and would-be virtuous purusha. Epigrammatically, I'm damned if I do—and I'm damned if I don't!

But am I alone in my sinfulness and turpitude? To ask the question is almost to answer it. Open disbelief in the various hell mythi, for instance, was surely never so evident in the past as it is to-day. And if a micron minority yet profess to credit the pyromanic postulations of the priests, this minority, you may be sure, owe their otherwise inexplicable credulity to some ulterior motive. No sane man who claims to believe in hell entertains for one moment the fantastic notion that *he* will ever go there. But the reason for his incredulity may well take the form of a mother-in-law, a rich and miserly uncle, or a successful and envied business rival. In such circumstances, I might be sorely tempted to believe in hell myself. But it will be obvious that to-day hell as a theological threat compares with space in the matter of emptiness—to the disadvantage of space. This sad state of affairs, I incline to believe, results from a cardinal error which was made when the important matter of the location of hell was considered. After the conception of the fraud, there would remain to be enacted the ceremony of choosing and consecrating a suitable site. And as every student of ghostly pathology well knows, those entrusted by the various gods to perform this sacred rite one and all found regions subterrestrial an irresistible lure. There, surely, was a situation providently provided. Not only was it conveniently near to hand, but it was undeniably and quite easily demonstratively hot. Here I pause reverently to admire the ineffable wisdom, the irrefutable logic, the incontrovertible evidence of divine guidance thus disclosed. Hell is hot; so is the interior of the earth; ergo, there lies hell! No theological theorem could hope for a proof more indisputable.

It was the discovery that this earthly paradise, this geocentric gem of the cosmos, was in reality an insignificant, life-infested ball cast in a mould of Satanic sphericity which, I submit, has all but extinguished the fires of hell. For there must inevitably have been realized that no finite sphere could be expected safely to house an interior population of an unlimited number. The Devil's Domain must of necessity be doomed to become fatally overcrowded, lamentably incapable of accommodating the soul of another sole. Once this danger was realized by the archimages, I suspect that their secret desire was immediately to have done with the fraud. True, quietly to abandon hell after all the centuries devoted by their worthy and no less inspired predecessors to keeping its fires burning, suddenly to confess that it was just another Grim Fairy Tale, would hardly be an action conducive to the preservation of their bogus prestige. But is not this danger more apparent than real, in view of the fact that the whole history of their mumbo-jumbo consists of an unbroken series of no less damaging admissions? I believe that it is, for what, after all, is the confession of yet another holy lie? On the other hand, imagine their having

to admit that Darwin, far from spending eternity submerged to the neck in boiling pitch, as he so justly deserves, is at this moment sitting at ease on a marble slab, gaily strumming on a harp with the elect! Or that Nietzsche is even now flapping his wings in preparation for yet another heavenly glide! Or that H. I. Mencken, the Baltimore Beelzebub, is destined, when the hourly prayers for his decease at last receive attention, to be presented with a halo instead of a tail, and elected an archangel forthwith! No; if only for Mencken alone, hell must be preserved in all its ancient fury—nay, stoked up and quadrupled in its fury!

I do not here propose to weary you with an account of the desperate efforts made by the archdruids of the ninety and nine one and only true cults to explain away the old hells, and at the same time convincingly portray new and even hotter ones. The colossal extent of their failure in this laudable endeavour is surely plain for all to see. Even the announcement that branch or sub-hells would be inaugurated in Mars and Venus, and in time in all the planets, in order to relieve local congestion, failed to solve the problem. And, ultimately, as is well known, the suggestion was squashed from within—in this country by the British Hells for British People movement, and elsewhere by the Anti-alien Hell Union of Terrestrial Bipedes.

Having at last reluctantly given up hope of ever encountering even a remotely plausible solution to the problem, I have recently gone to the trouble of devising one myself. Believing it to be my duty to my fellow men, I pass it on freely, and ask in return nothing more than a slight measure of reciprocative redemption. My prescribed 90,000 hell-years in Milhakupa might be reduced, say, by half. Or by a third, even. I am a city man, and my proboscis is somewhat sensitive to certain odours bucolic. At all events, the prospect of being immersed in a bog of dung as food for worms—the punishment concerned—is not quite so pleasing as the thought of being slowly hacked to pieces, which awaits me in Sanjiva, or of being knocked about with red hot clubs—one of the pleasures of Kalasutta. But to return to my theory, evolved only after days of copious prayer and deep meditation. It is my modest claim that it completely solves the whole burning question. My hell is capable of unlimited accommodation, the reality of its fires is beyond dispute, and it is within easy reach of all. Moreover, old beliefs are not discredited, challenged, or even questioned. My theory, on the contrary, actually confirms them.

Beginning with the subterrestrial hell of old, it may be safely assumed that thanks to the sphericity of this Earth, conditions did eventually become not a little congested below. Hence the plague of London, the death of Queen Anne, the fall of Rome, prohibition, the Salvation Army, the Baldwin misgovernment, and other unmistakable signs and portents of demiurgic displeasure. The damned became so jammed, indeed, that old tenants were handed back their bowels, scraped clean of brimstone and sulphur, and, after being carefully extinguished and deodorized, told to get to heaven out of it. Naturally, there was much discontent amongst those who remained. It was at this point, unless the visiting angels have misled me, that Satan decided that hell must be moved into more commodious quarters—the site of his choice being the empyrean. And so it came to pass that for six days and six nights there was an unceasing transmigration of lost souls into the stratosphere. The exact date on which the daemonic exodus began, originally revealed to me after incessant prayer, and since confirmed by laborious calculations, was Friday, March 13, 1933. As will readily

be evident, at least to all theologians, this is conclusively proved by the fact that the earth moves round the sun, and that the square of the earth's radius does not equal that of the base of the Great Pyramid, even when multiplied by seven times seven.

So much for theory. And now let me reveal that this hell-in-the-heavens has actually been detected, though hitherto it has remained unrecognized as such. I refer to the recent discoveries of Professor E. V. Appleton,\* whose amazing revelations surely outrival those of Dante, St. John, and Artai Viraf combined. This modern apocalypst has disclosed the astonishing fact that old-fashioned ideas have been swept completely away. Hell, indeed has been modernized throughout. Customers are no longer bathed from head to tail in boiling pitch. They suffer a continuous bombardment of electrons instead—winter noon concentration, 310,000 electrons per cubic centimeter of hell; summer noon ditto, 570,400. Even the temperature is kept under scientific control, it being standardized (in summer at noon) at about 1,000 degrees Centigrade. And the threat of overcrowding, of course, no longer exists. Space offers infinite scope for expansion. Doubtless it all seems very amazing, but in reality it is as simple as A.B.C., or at any rate no more complicated than D.E.F.—Region F being the official designation of this heavenly hell.

And the consequences? There can be no doubt but that the earth, deprived of its calorific core, will grow steadily cooler and cooler, and it may be prophesied that snow will fall next winter, probably at the Poles. In the meantime, it has been triumphantly announced (*vide the Daily Mail*) that ultra-short waves cannot be of real use for broadcasting, and that man will never be able to fly to the moon. Alas! subscribed as I always have to the belief that it will be necessary to move heaven and earth in order to promote even a modest lunar journey, it would now seem that I shall be called upon to affirm that such an undertaking will also necessitate the moving—or at least the raising—of hell. But I am forgetting. *I don't believe in hell!*

P. E. CLEATOR.

\* The earth's atmosphere is arbitrarily divided into belts, or layers. The lowest layer is termed the troposphere; it extends (upwards) to a height of about seven miles. Thereafter, for a further height of sixty odd miles, is the region known as the stratosphere. Above the stratosphere lies the ionosphere. Heaven appears to be missing. Various levels in these regions are alphabetically designated. Thus the ionosphere contains the so-called Kennelly-Heaviside or "G" layer.

The scene of the Professor's discovery lies above the "G" layer. It takes the form of an encompassing layer of intense heat (1,000 degrees Centigrade)—a belt of flame completely encircling the earth. Alphabetically, it is known as Region F. Professor Appleton terms it "Appleton's Layer." After due prayer, I took the liberty of rechristening it *Appleton's Inferno*, in memory of Our Lady and the Holy Ghost.

There is an Atheism which is unto death; there is another Atheism which is the very life-blood of all true faith. It is the power of giving up what, in our best, our most honest moments, we know to be no longer true; it is the readiness to replace the less perfect, however dear, however sacred it may have been to us, by the more perfect, however much it may be detested, as yet, by others. It is the true self-surrender, the true self-sacrifice, the truest trust in truth, the truest faith. Without that Atheism religion would long ago have become a petrified hypocrisy; without that Atheism, no new religion, no reform, no reformation, no resuscitation would ever have been possible; without that Atheism no new life is possible for anyone of us.—*Max Müller*

## Bible Chronology

SMITH: "Upon referring to my Family Bible this morning, to verify the birth of my father, I noticed that in the margin of the first chapter of Genesis, it was shown that the world was created in 4004 B.C. This makes it less than 6,000 years old, which cannot be correct."

Brown: "Until comparatively recently Christianity taught, and insisted upon its followers believing, that the world was created about 6,000 years ago. It was not until scientists had proved, beyond all doubt, that its age had been underestimated by millions of years, that Christianity was compelled reluctantly to withdraw its claim, and admit that it had made a mistake. A little more than 100 years ago, Dr. Blair, in a sermon, told his listeners, 'What is very remarkable, the most authentic chronology and history of most nations coincides with the account of scripture, and makes the period during which the world has been inhabited by the race of men, not to exceed beyond 6,000 years.'" Dr. Blair was an eminent divine, and, presumably, his utterance was considered, at the time, to be the acme of wisdom. To-day a Minister of the Gospel making this statement from the pulpit would be considered, even by the most ignorant of his congregation, to be unfit for his post."

S.: "Do you know if the date, 4004 B.C., is still being shown in the new editions of the Bible?"

B.: "I do not. I cannot believe, however, that the authorities are desirous of perpetuating the error, the only effect of which, they must know, would be to excite general ridicule."

S.: "Can you give other instances where Christianity has had to admit that its teachings were false?"

B.: "It taught that the world was flat and persecuted and burnt those who contended it was round. It put to death so-called witches, believing that by so doing it was obeying a divine command. To-day it admits that the world is round, and that there are no such beings as witches, and never were."

S.: "Has not a change taken place in its attitude towards Hell?"

B.: "In the past it taught, with all the emphasis at its command, the doctrine of eternal punishment. I well remember how in my boyhood the clergy made my flesh creep with their harrowing description of the torture awaiting the wicked. Although Christianity has not actually abandoned the doctrine, it is gradually dropping it, and I predict that before long it will join the other discarded dogmas. The doctrine is utterly opposed to reason, and is too great a strain on the credulity of the average Christian. If you were to ask 100 educated Christians their opinion of Hell, I venture to say that 99 would emphatically reject the original conception, and out of this number, not many would hold similar ideas on the subject. Each would have his or her pet interpretation, all probably founded upon demonstrable falsehood, but differing completely from the old fire and brimstone theory. In these circumstances its change of attitude is not surprising."

S.: "Its attitude towards the healing of the sick is also different now. Is it not?"

B.: "Yes. While it is true that even in the present comparatively enlightened age certain of its representatives profess to cure the sick by what they call faith-healing, and by personally conducted pilgrimages to so-called holy shrines, it is recognized by the majority of Christians that the medical and sanitary authorities deal far more efficaciously with sickness than any agency claiming divine patronage. In the old days pilgrimages to shrines, and the prayers of priests were considered all that were necessary to cure diseases. It was the policy of Christianity to discourage the physician and his art, as it was considered he was encroaching on its preserves, thereby reducing the profits of the shrines. The value of these priestly 'cures' can be gauged by the death-rate. In Europe, in the old days, it was very high, Draper, in his *History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science*, estimating it at about 1 in 23 against 1 in 40 in the 'seventies. With the further advance of the sciences, it must be even lower to-day."

S.: "It is clear that Christianity cannot boast of a

credible past. As an instrument of peace its failure has been even more conspicuous than its indifference to social justice. What do you think the future has in store for it in its conflict with the Secular forces?"

B.: "Although its arsenal is well stocked with credulity, superstition and money, three weapons essential for its existence, I believe it will eventually be compelled to admit defeat. Whatever is founded on fiction cannot endure. Its grotesque dogmas, not surpassed in absurdity even by the Hindu mythology, must inevitably crumble with the spread of knowledge. I foresee the time when future historians will relate how the present day 'learned' treatises and 'eloquent' sermons in their support are generally considered even more ridiculous than Dr. Blair's effort."

S.: "Very likely."

PRO REASON.

## Acid Drops

The Archbishop of Canterbury has issued a statement that Christians are justified in going to war if it is a "just war." We are not surprised to find a number of people enquiring, "What is a just war?" The answer is simple. Every war is a just war, there has never been an unjust war—that is so long as we take the statement of those engaged in war who speak for their own side. But if we take the statement concerning the other party in a war, then every war is an unjust war. So the answer is that there has either never been a just or there has never been an unjust war. For example, every war that we have fought is a just war, but every nation that has been engaged in fighting us has been waging an unjust war. France has had just wars with Germany, but never with us. Christian teaching is so helpful, when it is properly understood!

The *Church Times*—which represents the Anglo-Catholics—in a leading article on the class war in Spain, says:—

We have said, and we repeat, that the Roman Catholic Church with its immense international influence, is now definitely allied with the forces of reaction. . . . Its most influential spokesmen in England enlorged the Abyssinian campaign as an effort to extend Christian civilization. Its priests and its lay apologists are now busy describing a military rebellion, supported by Foreign Powers, and largely dependent on Moslem mercenaries as a war for the Christian Faith. . . . Rome is for slavery, Canterbury for liberty.

There is a familiar ring about this denunciation. It was the kind of thing that filled the Protestant press in England during almost the whole of the nineteenth century. Rome was always the tiger, Canterbury always the lamb. Whatever views one may have about the terrible events in Spain, the war there is really something more than a struggle between Rome and Canterbury.

The Bishop of Winchester writing recently on the broadcasting of religious services said, that he "found it difficult to sympathize with those who, in the alleged interests of religion are against the broadcasting of services." "How grievous the loss to Christianity would have been," he added, "if the wireless had been given over, as in some countries, solely to amusement and secular instruction, while from one end of the week to another no word about God had ever passed over the ether?" We quite agree; it would have been a grievous loss to Christianity. The B.B.C. with its religious directors, knows this as well as the good Bishop; and it knows also the grievous harm which could be done to Christianity if a few Freethought lectures by competent Freethinkers, were also broadcasted. The fact that our own side is so rigorously boycotted, is proof enough of the strength of our case. The B.B.C. never boycotts "harmless" talks. It should be noted that the Bishop of Winchester is the Chairman of the B.B.C. Religious Advisory Committee which explains quite a lot.

The old negro parson had called his flock together during a drought to pray for rain. Entering the pulpit, he gazed sadly upon his bareheaded congregation. "De faith of some of you niggahs is deplorable," he began. "Here we are gathered together to ask de good Lord to send us rain, and not one of you has brought an umbrella."

In a review of Mr. Lloyd George's War Memoirs the following passage appears:—

On Good Friday, March 29, Amiens was in danger, and its loss would have meant catastrophe. That morning, as the battle was at its height, Mr. Lloyd George and Sir M. Hankey, after waiting anxiously for news—decided at last to go to St. Anne's, Soho, to hear Bach's Passion music. As we took our seats we heard the clergyman intone that poignant supplication, "O God, make speed to save us." How fervently we joined in the response, "O Lord, make haste to help us"! When we returned to Downing Street we heard that the Germans had been beaten off with heavy losses and that their advance was slowing down opposite Amiens.

When we returned to Downing Street. This appears to be a particularly quick piece of work by the Lord of Hosts.

Pastor J. W. Townson, a Driffield minister, giving an address at a Harvest Thanksgiving Service, spoke of the loveliness and beauty of the sight they had seen that afternoon. It would be a very difficult thing to look upon a fairer sight than the one they had seen since they came into that church, grown-up men and women, young men and maidens, boys and girls, and tiny tots bringing their gifts to the House of God and placing them on those tables.

This reminds us of the reverend gentleman in a similarly exuberant frame of mind, who exclaimed, "and what impressed me most, dearly beloved brethren, was when little Annie Jones walked up the aisle and laid an egg on the altar."

We are informed that a big poster in Mabledon Place (off Euston Road), runs as follows:—

A RESOLUTION  
Towards the honour of  
THE LORD JEHOVAH  
Where the word Lord  
is used for a person  
it shall  
BE SPELLED LERD.

Is this to be the first move in the reform of the House of Lerds?

Referring to the "untouchables" in India, Fr. Holmes of the Oxford Mission to Calcutta says, in a religious journal, that "there has been a steady influx of converts for many years. On the average there are about 150,000 baptisms a year. No one supposes that it is a deep spiritual hunger and thirst which has drawn these people to its satisfaction in Christ." Quite true; no one could possibly suppose such nonsense. Yet Fr. Holmes and his fellow missionaries do not worry about this when they ask for funds. The people here who support them are not told that whatever it is which converts untouchables to Christianity, it is not "deep spiritual hunger and thirst" for Christ.

Fr. Holmes admits that Christianity does not offer its Hindu converts, "social position, political power, material advantages." It may give them education, but that is not "a paramount need." Their "paramount need is God." It is "the knowledge and love of Him which comes in Jesus Christ," who will take "their sins out of their hearts by taking their hearts out of their sins." This is a great and glorious gospel for the unfortunate untouchables, is it not? What possible good can this kind of nonsense be for anyone it is difficult to discover;

but it is hard on the poor in this country that hundreds of thousands of pounds can be squandered abroad to spread such hopeless rubbish.

Quite a number of reviewers of Mr. Noyes's latest work, *Voltaire*, are surprised that a Catholic could be found to champion the terrible unbeliever, whose saying *Ecrasez l'infâme* has been used as a battle-cry by most "infidels" for many years. They seem quite surprised to find that Mr. Noyes has discovered that Voltaire was not an Atheist. Only Christians ever said he was. Voltaire was a Theist (or Deist) and even though books like the *System of Nature* shook his faith not a little, and catastrophes like the earthquake at Lisbon quite a lot, he never took up the extreme position of Diderot and D'Holbach.

But no one can read the series of anti-religious works and pamphlets of Voltaire without realizing what a terrible enemy to Christianity was this great writer—perhaps the greatest name in French literature. To excuse his attack on the Church by saying all he was against was the corruption and hypocrisy of its priests is so much nonsense. Voltaire based his contemptuous rejection of Christianity on fundamentals. We are glad that such a loyal and orthodox convert to Catholicism as Mr. Noyes is championing the great Voltaire; and nothing would please us more than to see other Catholics reading him. We hope that they will share Voltaire's views on revelation, miracles, the Virgin Birth, and the Resurrection.

By the way, is not Voltaire one of the forbidden authors to Catholics? Are not his works on the *Index*? Are Catholics able to read Voltaire without tremblingly obtaining permission from their priests; and what will happen if reading the great "infidel" converts them to his anti-Christian views?

From *New Times and Ethiopia News*:—

The weekly paper, *Civiltà Catholica*, published in Rome, is the organ of the reverend Jesuit fathers. This published the following quite false report of the affair at Wal-Wal: "On December 5 a group of armed Ethiopians attacked our native soldiers at the wells of Wal-Wal in Italian Somaliland."

Thus from the start the organ of the Jesuits took the side of Fascism and declared Italian a locality which British military maps indicated to be some 50 miles within the Ethiopian frontier.

The *Daily Telegraph* has been printing letters from Lord Glasgow and the Duchess of Atholl. They are both active leaders in the Faith Defence League, but the best way of defending the faith is, as is common, a matter of dispute between them. Lord Glasgow thinks the enemy is "those Russians" or, as the Old English typography had it, Ruffians, and that there is no danger to the faith to be anticipated from Germany. The Duchess of Atholl points out that as German re-armament raises questions "affecting the safety of this Country," Germany too must be considered as an enemy of the Faith. How clearly does the Faith express itself on these tiny issues, and how contemptible is the type of mind that flourishes where Faith nourishes.

Is the "Sacred Host" still "sacred" when swallowed by a rat? This question has been solemnly argued by Catholic theologians as well as whether the "Blessed Sacrament" still exists when burned in a fire? A priest in New York recently made a desperate attempt to rescue the Blessed Sacrament when a fire broke out in his church. He unfortunately failed to save it, or indeed any of the "sacred" vessels or vestments, and the damage is estimated at about £10,000. The question now arises—if the Blessed Sacrament is alive on all other altars, why bother saving any particular one anywhere else? Surely it can never be really destroyed? We wish some Catholic theologian would give us a learned reply.

In Dublin, the priests are not taking very kindly to those of their flock who try to be both Communist and Catholic. "Just imagine," cried Father Flinn, the other day, "a man wearing at the same time an image of the Sacred Heart and a badge of the sworn enemy of Jesus Christ. . . . I have no hesitation in saying, provided that the wearers know what they are doing, it was a direct insult to the Sacred Heart." But, of course, there is the point of view of the unbelieving Communist who might quite reasonably claim that his own badge was insulted by being in so close a proximity to that of the Sacred Heart. It is a dilemma which the Catholic Communist will have to settle for himself.

"True" Communism is at last defined by Archbishop Hinsley. It is, of course, really Roman Catholicism. In an address at Oxford recently, he said: "We have to be true Communists; we are all members of Christ; all members of one body. There is the communion of the religious orders. This is very different from the system which is being forced upon us by violence and by fraud, which denies men Jesus Christ, and denies the very existence of God." The Archbishop is quite right; it is very different. Whether Communism will prove the final solution of the evil and injustice in this world may be a question. But there can be no question that religion, and particularly the Archbishop's, has been found wanting and, so far, has utterly failed.

Mr. T. H. Baxter, Secretary of the London Cinema Christian Council, at a meeting at Sheffield, said:—

A cinema is just as essentially a part of the equipment of a church as an organ. Sooner or later the time will come when every church will have a projector and have cinema shows.

Mr. Baxter thinks "the Christian Church has been very slow in taking advantage of the medium of the cinema." We do not think the Christian Church is slow in anything that savours of useful advertisement. Very early in the history of the cinema the *Life and Adventures of our Lord* was put on the screen, but it did not prove a winner. The early films represented even the *physical* resurrection, Jesus being shown to ascend perpendicularly from the tomb into the empyrean. The applause which followed this *tour de force* rather shocked the religious, who thought the proper reaction to this "shot" should have been reverential calm. Anyway it has not to our knowledge ever reappeared on the screen. Of course if Chaplin were substituted for Jesus the reactions would similarly be objected to as unsuitable, but the Church cannot nowadays afford to be finical, and certainly it would increase the small percentage of Church attenders, which is perhaps the main objective. The last brainy suggestion for a religious film we remember noticing was that of the Bishop of Southwark, who thought that *Jeremiah* could be dealt with in such a way as to produce a spiritual harvest!

The declaration of Bishop Gallagher, in the States, that the voice of Father Coughlin is the voice of God, has been responsible for some vigorous comments in the *Los Angeles Evening News*, by Westbrook Pegler, in his New York Notes:—

The millions of Americans who intend to vote for Mr. Roosevelt in November will challenge the proposition that it was the voice of God which called the President of the United States a liar and a double-crosser, and then delivered an insincere, half-hearted apology. God does not apologize at all, and a shyster apology is worse than none. . . . When it is claimed, with all the prestige of the office which Bishop Gallagher holds that God speaks through Father Coughlin, some of us are forced to seek another answer for he [Father Coughlin] seems ill-tempered, intemperate, evasive and shy.

Mr. Pegler, unfortunately, has to stress the important point of the growing tendency to ignore "the liberty of Americans to acknowledge no God and reject all religion without impairment of their rights."

In New Jersey a case has recently been brought by a respectable housewife against three neighbours who were persistently molesting and annoying her. This seemingly routine case produced the startling defence that the plaintiff was a witch. Their testimony was:—

I saw her change herself into a horse and walk on her hind legs.

I saw her bend down and her head changed into a dog's head and she had big bumps on her back.

One night I saw her at the window. She looked like a frightful animal. She seemed to be dressed in the skin of an animal. There was also a blazing stream of fire above her head.

Her head would shrink to the size of my fist. Her body would become large, and horns would appear on her head and she would walk on all fours like an animal.

The magistrate was one of those soulless men, utterly devoid of spirituality. A soulful man would have looked into the "evidence" for these phenomena, and if his spirituality had been of a high quality, would probably have considered it good enough. Instead, he simply rebuked the defendants and warned them against persisting in their campaign of molestation.

The Autobiography of the late Mr. Chesterton is appearing weekly in the *Tablet*, and has many amusing and entertaining passages. It also contains the usual slanders against those with whom the author differed in opinion. We willingly concede that Mr. Chesterton frankly alludes to his own "period of lunacy," and it was probably in one of these recurring periods that Chesterton refers to:—

Some hoary horrible old Darwinian who said the weakest must go to the wall.

The innuendo that Darwin said this, or that it is characteristic of Darwinians, is merely a characteristic Christian falsehood. It was David the Psalmist, "the man after God's own heart," who said:—

Ye shall be slain all of you as a bowing wall.

Psalm 62.

but then the same writer said "All men are liars."

"Most of us," says Dr. Jas. Reid:—

can think of someone at least of whom we can say, "I have seen thy face as it had been the face of God." It is a startling thing to realize this.

Startling? So we should think, when we bear in mind Exodus xxxiii. 20: "Thou canst not see my face and live!" We doubt if the rest of God is any more charming than his face. Certainly there is something nauseating in the testimony of Pharaoh's magicians, who saw "the finger of God" in a plague of lice.

### The "Freethinker" Circulation Drive

It is proposed to celebrate the coming-of-age of the present editorship by an attempt to create a substantial increase in the circulation of this paper. The plan suggested is:—

(1) Each interested reader is to take an extra copy for a period of twelve months, and to use this copy as a means of interesting a non-subscriber to the point of taking the *Freethinker* regularly.

(2) So soon as this new subscriber is secured, the extra copy may be dropped by the present subscriber. Until this is accomplished, he will regard the extra threepence weekly (for one year) as a fine for his want of success.

The plan is simple, and it is not costly; but it does mean a little work, and whether or not it is more blessed to give than to receive, it is certainly easier for most to give than it is to work. But in this case it is the work alone that will yield permanent benefit. There are many thousands of potential readers in the country; why not try and secure some of them?



# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

FOR Circulating and Distributing the *Freethinker*.—H. Lewis, 5s.; D. Fisher, 4s.

H. LEWIS.—Thanks for the *Times* article. The statement of Sir Arthur Keith that "racial antagonisms" are "deeply," "situated in the primitive organization of the human brain," is just scientific nonsense. Even "nonsense" may be too respectful a term for such an opinion. What deep primitive quality of the human brain is that which accounts for the existence of the British or for any other "race"? The only possible scientific significance of "race" is that of a people who have been subjected to the influence of identical institutions and to continuous pressure of a common social life. And that racial quality may be modified and annihilated in the course of a few generations—even in a single generation if the infant is placed in a new environment at a sufficiently early age.

H. SHAW.—See "Sugar Plums" column. A sociology that takes inadequate heed of the scientific anthropology that has grown up since the time of Tylor is bound to be wanting.

H. MARTIN.—We have the matter in view, and an announcement will be made nearer the date.

A. W. MILLWARD.—Thanks. Shall appear as early as possible.

A. B. MOSS.—Pleased to know, and others will be equally pleased, that you are well. We are getting along nicely. Work is not the worst kind of tonic one can take.

T. LAWSON.—Mr. Cohen, all being well, expects again to visit Liverpool this season. Glad you enjoyed Sunday's lecture.

J. A. FINDLAY.—There are numerous translations of the *Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*. Any reputable bookseller will procure a copy at from a shilling to five shillings, and it is in Dent's *Everyman Library*.

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.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connexion with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary R. H. Roselli, giving as long notice as possible.

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—

One year, 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."

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 1367.

## Sugar Plums

On Sunday next (Nov. 1) Mr. Cohen will speak in the Winter Garden Ballrooms, High Street, Clapham, on "The Fight for Freedom of Thought." Admission will be free, but there will be a limited number of reserved seats. The lecture commences at seven o'clock. Mr. Cohen will not be lecturing more than he can help this season, and this may be his only London lecture this year.

The Picton Hall, Liverpool, was well filled on Sunday last, to listen to Mr. Cohen. There was a good sale of literature, and a few questions followed the address. Freethinking friends were present from Preston, Birkenhead and other places, and, judging from the applause, everyone had a good time. Mr. Shortt occupied the chair.

Sunday evening's meeting was the more noticeable because on this Sunday in the year the Liverpool authorities graciously permit the picture houses to be opened. Last Sunday was one of these days, and long before opening time lengthy queues were waiting. It is one of the disgraces of this country, that the enjoyment of the majority of the people lies at the mercy of organized bigotry. Sunday Cinema performances are always well attended, and we are of opinion that if the Cinema proprietors were to take their courage in both hands, announce admission free with a charge for reserved seats (which would signify all save about 100) the bigots could be left stewing in their own bigotry. Sunday Societies worked for years on these lines, and could not be legally stopped.

We are glad to see that members and friends at Birkenhead are making the Council (a Labour Council, we believe) pay as dearly as is possible for its refusal to let the Town Hall for a lecture by Mr. Cohen. They are giving the matter publicity. A very excellent letter appears in the *Liverpool Echo* from Mr. Fletcher, Secretary of the Birkenhead Branch, demolishing the apology which one member of the Council, Alderman Tweedle, issued. We congratulate Mr. Fletcher on his dignified, but devastating, reply, and upon the energetic campaign that is being carried on by the Branch.

We have just turned down several letters, chiefly on account of their length, but in one or two cases, because they had nothing useful to say. So we wish to lay down the following guide to letter writers—from whom we are always pleased to hear, and, when the letter is a good one, we are sure all are pleased to read.

- (1) A writer must have something to say.
- (2) He must be able to say it clearly, and it must be pertinent to the subject he is discussing.
- (3) He must also say it briefly, not asking for more space than will occupy half a column of this paper. If he cannot do that, he should, if it is a subject suitable to these columns, submit an article. Brevity is also advisable here, but an article may vary in its length.
- (4) The editor must be the judge as to what ought to go in or be kept out. He may be a rotten sort of a judge, but that is not really open to discussion, so long as he must decide.
- (5) A letter need not discuss the whole of a subject. One or more points—if more than one fits the indicated space—should be taken. If the point is worth making the letter will be worth writing. With most papers letters are rejected often because of their length or lack of pertinency.

With regard to number two. We have just turned down a letter from Mr. A. Whitfield, that would have occupied nearly a column, in which the writer objects to Mr. Cohen's statements that there is a distinction between the economics of animal groups and human society, and that the human mind transforms the material environment and exerts a growing domination. We should have thought it self-evident to even a Communist who had never read or understood Marx, that the very existence of people being passive under conditions that permit the destruction of food when food is wanting, the manner in which discoveries and inventions overcome climatic, geographical and other difficulties, would prove to what an extent mind does transform and dominate the environment. And the man who imagines he has proved the statement that the economic factor is the only one governing life by saying that if I had not the money to buy, I could not own the books I have, is really not equipped for a discussion of the subject. If it were not for the growing influence of mental life on the environment, we fail to see the use of books, or even of propaganda. Perhaps Mr. Whitfield will see why I have not inserted his letter. It would have meant a deluge of other letters pointing out its irrelevancy.

We thought it better to avoid printing letters while the discussion with Mr. Lindsay was in progress, but we have no objection to them now—so long as the above suggestions are observed and no one comes after the editor's scalp because he has not inserted his letter. We had a burglary in the office the other day, but we do not want a murder—that is so messy.

Mr. G. Whitehead will speak for the Birmingham Branch N.S.S. to-day (October 25) in the Shakespeare Rooms, Edmund Street, near Livery Street, on "Free-thought versus Dictatorship." The lecture begins at 7 p.m. and the committee are expecting to see members of the Branch present with as many friends as possible.

Mr. G. Bedborough will speak for the West London Branch N.S.S., to-day (October 25), on "Modernism: God Up to Date," with a special reference to the Modern Churchman's movement. The lecture takes place in the "Laurie Arms," Crawford Place, Edgware Road, London, W., at 7.30 p.m. Both the speaker and the Branch deserve all the support Freethinkers in the area can give, and there should certainly be a full house this evening.

On Monday evening, October 26, at 8 p.m., at the Wesleyan Church Literary Society, Lady Margaret Road, London, N.W.5, Mr. L. Ebury will open a discussion on "Some Aspects of the Case for Unbelief." Such discussions, if carried out in the right spirit, are very useful to both sides, and the N.S.S. will be pleased to send speakers to other Literary and Debating Societies, where a genuine desire exists for honest discussion on religious questions.

The *British Weekly* is printing *The Unpublished Diary of George Woolcott*, one-time gunner for Lord Nelson, and afterwards a Sailer-Evangelist in the East End of London. Woolcott was a humane man, and to the judicious reader, his pietistic diary is entertaining enough in parts. But it contains sufficient evidence to show how religion tends to check rather than increase man's decent impulses. On April 4, 1828, Woolcott visited "some of the poor creatures who had been Hurted by the fall of the Brunswick Theatre," a happening he undoubtedly attributed to the Divine wrath. To a Mrs. Spaul, at No. 7 White Lion Street, he delivered himself in this manner:—

My Dear Woman, what do you mean to do with that life that God has so graciously given you? Will you devote it still to the great enemy of souls? . . . Did not your conscience tell you that you was trampling on the Authority of the Almighty by breaking his Sabbath? Ha, Sir, it did, but I was some measure Obligated to work or lose it altogether, and this is my Trouble.

. . . I then went into the other room where her husband was laying Dreadfully hurted with what we call at sea his broadside stove in. This was no time for ceremonies. I therefore, as in the case of his wife, endeavoured to make the best use of my time. I said Mr. Spaul I am a stranger to you. . . . But I hope I am a friend to your immortal soul. . . . I asked him if he was one that worked on the Lord's Day. He said he was. And were you not afraid to do so? I knew it was not right, but what could I do? Do my friend, said I, why I tell you what I would do. Rather than work on the Lord's Day I would go without meat.

Let us hope that the poor fellow with his "broadside stove in," realized that it was "no time for ceremonies."

The mid-world is best. Nature, as we know her, is no saint. The lights of the Church, the ascetics, Gentoos, and corn-eaters, she does not distinguish by any favour. She comes eating and drinking and sinning. Her darlings, the great, the strong, the beautiful, are not children of our law, nor do they come out of the Sunday-school, nor weigh their food, nor punctually keep the Commandments.—Emerson.

## Masterpieces of Freethought

SIX DISCOURSES ON THE MIRACLES OF OUR SAVIOUR

By THOMAS WOOLSTON

IV.

WOOLSTON has some litig things to say about Jesus and the fig-tree. "It is," he cries, "so like the malignant practices of *Witches*, who, as *Stories* go, upon *Envy*, *Grudge*, or *Distaste*, smite their neighbours' cattle with languishing *Distempers* till they die. . . . If *Mahomet*, and not *Jesus*, had been the Author of this *Miracle*, our *Divines* would have presently discover'd the *Devil's Foot* in it, and have said that *Satan* drew him into a *Scrape*, in the execution of this mad and foolish frolick on purpose to expose him for a *Wizard*, and his *Musselmen* of all ages since for *Fools* in believing on him." And he proceeds to show that St. Ambrose and St. John of Jerusalem explained the "miracles" as being purely symbolical. "But what," Woolston adds, "in my opinion, is an absolute Demonstration, that there's no Truth in the Letter of this Story, is, what our Saviour adds, upon the Disciples wondering at the sudden withering of the Fig-tree saying *that if they had Faith they should not only do what was done to the Fig-tree; but should say to this Mountain (that was near him, I suppose) be thou removed and cast into the Sea, and it shall be done.* But these things were never literally done by them. Consequently *Jesus* himself did not literally curse the fig-tree; or the Disciples wanted faith for the doing of the said Miracles, which is an absurdity to suppose; or *Jesus* talked idly of a Promise to invest them with a Power, they were never to be possess'd of."

Here can be seen how, in the very simplest language, so that the most "unlettered" could understand, Woolston develops his argument against believing the drivell—there is no other word for it—of the fig-tree story. He does it much more fully than I can transcribe, of course—and it is this kind of analysis to which Sir Leslie Stephen takes so strong objection. It isn't "reverent" enough, forsooth! It pokes fun at holy beliefs! It hurt the faithful to be so laughed at and mocked! Would there were more Woolstons these days!

Woolston shows that even St. Augustine did not believe that the cursing of the fig-tree should be taken literally; "Yet if he had lived in our Days," adds Woolston, "he would have met with *Divines*, who for all the foresaid Absurdities and their Cogency to drive us to Allegory, do adhere to the Letter only, whether the Truth, Credibility, and Reasonableness of it be defensible or not." And it is sad to think that two hundred years after he wrote there are thousands of "Divines" who still believe, in spite of every appeal to reason and fact, that a "god" appeared 1000 years ago in Palestine, and not only cursed a fig-tree so that it withered, but did far sillier things with pompous solemnity, which are equally believed as literal fact. And what is still stranger, one comes across "Rationalists" who declare that the four Gospel writers believed that they were recording facts and not allegories. It is a strange world.

Here is how Woolston treats the story of the Pool of Bethesda:—

*Bethesda* is said to have five *Porches*, that is, as the Fathers agree, the five Books of Moses, which are so many Doors of Entrance into the House of Wisdom or the Grace of Christ. At these five *Porches* of the Five Books of Moses lay a great multitude of impotent Folk, *blind*, *halt*, *withered*,

And who are these mystically? The ignorant, erroneous, and unstable in Faith and Principle, as the Fathers often understand them spiritually. And what is the Reason of these their mystical Diseases? Because, as St. Augustin and other Fathers say, they rest on the Letter of the Law, which throws them into various errors, like Diseases, of different kinds, of which they can't be cured without the Descent of the Spirit like an Angel, to instruct them mystically to interpret. With these impotent folk lay a *certain Man* who had an Infirmity. And who is this infirm Man? Mankind in general, say St. Cyril and St. Augustin. And what is his Infirmity? The Fathers call it the *Palsy* because of his instability, and Unsteadiness in Faith and Principles, which is now the case of Mankind. St. John calls it a *Weakness*; which being a general name of all Distempers, we can't guess what might be here the specific one. . . .

It is in this way that Woolston, with most elaborate detail, shows how this particular story must be looked upon as quite symbolical; and he insisted as he proceeded, that he would show "Christianity, as it is understood, to be the most unreasonable and absurd story that ever was told; and our modern systems of theology groundless and senseless in almost every Part of them." He, in fact, considered "Mahometanism a more reasonable religion than the Christian."

My space is limited otherwise I should have enjoyed showing the way Woolston dealt, not only with more of the absurd miracles of Jesus, but how he also gave an excellent analysis of the nonsense of the Resurrection which he does—to make matters worse—through the mouth of a supposed Jewish Rabbi. This gentleman is put forward on occasion, and, being a Jew, manages to get in a few more arguments in plainer language than Woolston, perhaps, would have allowed himself. "I desired him," says Woolston, "to forbear all Ludicrousness, Satire and Banter for fear of Offence: For though our Clergy liked Volumes of Jest and Facetiousness, if they were discharged against *Jews, Turks, and Infidels*; yet when they were levell'd at *Ministers of the Letter the Case was alter'd*, as quoth Plowden, and they were not to be borne with. Therefore he was to remember that decency, seriousness and calmness, of Argument required by the *Bishop of London*, or I durst not print it." The Jew—that is, Woolston himself—would then proceed to make mincemeat of the Resurrection in very plain language. Woolston shows how both Origen and St. Augustine both saw in the Resurrection, "an Image and Resemblance of [Jesus'] future and mystical Resurrection."

The *Six Discourses* had an extraordinary sale when it is remembered that the greater part of the population was quite illiterate. This is sometimes forgotten, as also is the fact that when Woolston wrote, the population in all England was perhaps no more than six millions. Dozens of replies were immediately forthcoming, a circumstance very disconcerting to Sir Leslie Stephen, who thought that the best answer to Woolston should have been "a contemptuous silence." The truth is that it is doubtful whether any one before Woolston had written with such power, clearness and argument against the reality of Christ's miracles. He literally put them in their place; that is, as undisguised nonsense if taken literally. And no one can carefully read his work without seeing how often his penetrating criticism went directly to the heart of the question and anticipated even such writers as Strauss himself.

Those who replied to Woolston were some of the most eminent divines of the day, by no means negligible, and very often extremely learned men; who, faced with such an audacious attack, were forced to

justify, not only the miracles, but the whole of Christianity itself. The curious reader should get hold of *A View of the Principal Deistical Writers*, by J. Leland, D.D., published in 1754, for a long list, by no means exhaustive, of the replies and their eminent authors. Considering how Sir Leslie Stephen thought that "a contemptuous silence" would have been the best reply to Woolston, it is interesting to note this list, for it proves that "contemptuous silence" was not the idea of contemporary writers. They saw in the *Six Discourses* a staggering blow to their faith, all the more so because, side by side with the mocking laughter at the credulous who believed in stupid miracles, there was indeed a learned and brilliant argument against the truth of Christianity.

If the miracles were symbolical and never happened, were the daily actions of Jesus to be taken as literal fact? Were any of the stories in the Gospels literal fact? What was the dividing line between fact and symbol where Jesus was concerned?

Woolston is not, unfortunately, read to-day. It is a pity, because no better preparation could be given to the budding Freethinker, who, after reading the *Discourses*, would never again look upon the miracles of Jesus with anything but the contempt they deserve. Once the miracles are seen to be symbolical, the next step ought to be to see that the whole Gospel is in the same vein, and the theory that Jesus never existed would be accepted by far more people than is the case at present. That theory is associated with the names of Volney, Dupuis, Robert Taylor, John M. Robertson, and W. B. Smith. And if Woolston is read aright, I feel that his name should be added to the list.

Let us pay homage to this fighting Freethinker, playing almost a lone hand, who not only suffered, but died, in prison, for the ludicrous "crime" of blasphemy. His work was not in vain.

H. CUTNER.

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## Those Christians

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It is impossible that Freethinkers should not be stirred by feelings of contempt when they are again and again confronted with evidences of the meanness and cowardice of Christians. Christians are cravens and cowards with regard to their own God, their own Devil, and their intellectual opponents. They will never face up to the main thesis of the last-mentioned. Poor lambs! Poor worms! Fit food are they for the wealthy capitalistic were-wolves, who maintain the great ecclesiastical corporations—for the wily clerical hawks who are for ever hovering on the watch for prey.

"Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I," cry these abject cravens—"my shield and hiding place!" Safety first! There is no material for heroism in these grovellers. Though none of us can be the master of his fate in face of heredity and deterministic law he can at least be the Captain of his soul, and in vindication of his manhood throw off the yoke of supernatural bondage. But moral cowardice must ever have as its concomitant, hypocrisy—and hypocrisy dies hard!

And did they but realize it, there are many tame and timid ladies and gentlemen calling themselves Rationalists, whose conduct and line of action (or inaction) serve to nourish hypocrisy and lengthen its life. The non-militant Freethinkers have so many friends associated with the Church that they are extremely reluctant to hurt these friends' feelings by

calling a spade a spade, instead of a God-given agricultural implement for making a hole in the ground. And their lady-like minds are readily shocked by the attitude and words of the mere secular fighting propagandist, who sees no good in having truck with the myth-bemused dependents on the thing so eloquently lauded by pulpiteers as the "Grace of God." This vulgar person finds no excuse for the Christian God tenable. He can appreciate the "Disgrace of God" and, from his study of history, the fact that God is a disgrace for his impotent handling of the affairs of humanity for so many years past. And from his standpoint, matters are too utterly urgent to permit of time to consider the hemi-demi-semi-quavers of these half-baked tame and timid ladies and gentlemen claiming to be Rationalists, but who nevertheless are the most dangerous foes of a real and vital Rationalism.

No, there can be no compromise. We mere propagandists are in the fight for truth with our gloves off. We are out with our coats off plying spade and pick in the search for Truth; and to ascertained Truth alone will we pay homage—by ascertained Truth alone will we be guided. We have no time for Gods, or Devils, or Unicorns, or Wyverns, or Dragons. We have no time for the baa-baa childish sentimentalities of the abject cravens of Christianity. We want to kill—not merely scotch—the were-wolves!

Meanwhile Religion continues its blockade of the Ports of free Intellectualism. It holds a knife at the throat of the independent (and impecunious) thinker who ventures to question all this "supernatural" humbug, and tries to free himself from the shackles of a strongly-organized hypocrisy. Shut him up! Shoot him! Hang him! Nay, dearly beloved brethren, were it not wiser to drown him and his cackling? Let us sing to the praise and glory of Almighty God, Hymn No. 375 in the old book, 527 in the new, "Rescue the Perishing." Thereafter our dear brother the ex-jail bird, James Crow, will give his testimony to the power of redeeming love. Selah!

IGNOTUS.

## Nationality and Internationalism

### II.

THE determining features either of race or sub-race were in process of evolution long anterior to recorded time. The usual explanation is that difference is due to selective adaptation to varying conditions of existence. Yet we are met by the fact that in a similar physical environment marked divergence may obtain among its inhabitants; so much so that they are classified under separate tribal names. Thus in an account of the work of recent explorers of unknown tracts of New Guinea (an island of some 311,000 square miles) it is stated: "Not only did they complete a flying survey of this hitherto unknown country, but upon the plateau beyond the limestone barrier they discovered a fertile country densely populated by unknown tribes, light-skinned, and with a culture and method of agriculture unlike those of Papuan tribes elsewhere." In the tropical Far East a general lassitude is usually attributed to the dwellers therein as a consequence of the hot damp climate, as compared with the energy generated among denizens of the temperate zones. Yet among the Chinese we find abundant energy in whatever clime they happen to be. This characterization is nothing new, but it is illustrated pertinently by an observer writing lately in the *Times*. He says:—

The Chinese and Japanese are not 'resigned'—resigned that is to an economic and political status less than those of the European countries. We travelled only in the South China Seas, and there we saw the Chinese everywhere, and the shadow of Japan. And there was this contrast that the Chinese were everywhere welcome, the Japanese everywhere dreaded. The Chinese were immigrants; a single Japanese was regarded as an invader, the pioneer of economic penetration, and the harbinger of political acquisitiveness. Not so the Chinese. In the Philippine Islands, in the Dutch East Indies, in Singapore, the Chinese is the skilful and trusted worker. Native labour, Filipino and Malayan and imported Tamil, admirably performs every monotonous job; but if the work requires discrimination or exceptional vigour, the employer looks round for a Chinese. . . . They seem to be the hardest and most cheerful workers in the world. The rickshawmen of Hong Kong and Singapore at the end of a mile's jog-trot in at least 80 degrees in the shade and goodness knows what in the sun, would beg eagerly to take one home again, and the smile would only vanish from their faces if one suggested that it might be better to have fresh runners. A jog-trot seems to be the normal rate of progression of the Chinese. . . . The Chinese are an exception to the rule about temperate and tropical climates, for, unlike the Japanese, they are equally impervious to great heat and great cold. They appreciate a good administration when they find it. Lately they have poured into Singapore in hundreds of thousands. There they flourish exceedingly. Seven different Chinese languages are spoken there and some of the earlier immigrants have already grown rich.

What is the secret of the exceptional adaptability and energy of these Celestials? . . . In reaction from certain explanations of these things in terms of "race," which call for further explanation, it is contended, in some quarters, that variations are purely accidental, that mankind is much the same, potentially, and they must yield to change of circumstance, education, etc. In reality, this is not so. The differences we have in view, whatever the causes that have produced them, are specific—not lightly to be modified, even allowing for the operation of mutatory forces. Those causes remain obscure.<sup>1</sup>

Organic segregation is to be distinguished from a combination of separate divisions into principalities, and empires with the shifting fortunes of territorial acquisition. This is particularly true of Asiatic movement—the story of the rise and fall of loosely-knit Kingdoms in the recurring struggle for lands and dominion, until quite recent times. The nearest approach to a known Asiatic Condominium was the Mongol Empire of the fourteenth century—the most signal phenomenon in its history. An ignorant Mongol chief, in the course of tribal war, in the neighbourhood of Lake Baikal, knits these tribes into a compact military organization, and keeps it occupied by a career of conquest throughout Asia, reaching into Europe. He devises a system of tactics which in-

<sup>1</sup> In the same regional area of the East Indies primitive peoples of separate ancestral genesis, living in the same environment, exhibit marked contrasts of physique, habit, and temperament—the Papuan and the Malay. The first, stature above the average ranging from 5 ft. 4 in. to 6 ft.; hair, black and frizzled; colour, deep shade of chocolate brown verging to black; temperament excitable, voluble, and laughter-loving, artistic taste shown in wood carving of house, etc., mainly agriculturist. Malay: physique below average, 5 ft. to 5 ft. 5 in.; hair black and lank; colour, yellowish or olive brown; temperament, quiet, reserved and taciturn, under excitement easily roused to fury, treacherous. Daring and bold sea rovers, traders, fishers and pirates, little agriculture. Malaysia at large has been affected in some islands by Hindu and Muslim culture among its more civilized inhabitants.

Cited from *Man, Past and Present*: A. H. Keane, revised by Dr. A. C. Haddon, Cambridge University Press, 1919.

spired by savage courage, and stern discipline, overcomes the forces of nearly every Kingdom to which they were opposed. And this conquest and destruction exhibits a merciless blood-lust unparalleled, for the hardy Mongols despised the luxury of the more civilized world they entered, and accounted human life of less value than animals killed for food. It illustrates in mordant colours the cruelty possible to *la bête humaine*.

That is the story of Temujin, entitled *Genghis Khan* = Emperor of all men. After his death, in 1227, this empire eventually extended from China to the Black Sea and the Persian Gulf. When its destructive rage was spent a tolerant overlordship, indifferent to the sectarian antagonisms of East or West, remained, until its dissolution through various causes towards the end of the fifteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

There followed by stages the emergence of the modern Kingdoms of Southern Asia, which, since the War, have been delimited into a number of Nation States, with strong ethnical or historic affinities, even if containing mixed tribal elements, apart from the Indian Empire and its dependencies, now entering on a unifying experiment. Revived national consciousness affects all these States, which include Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Saudi-Arabia and Yemen, Persia, Afghanistan, Siam. The militant empire of Japan presses on the borders through Eastern Asia of the troubled Chinese "Republic"; and confronts the dubious mass of the Soviet Republics which occupy Northern Asia to the Amur River, extending into Mongolia. Some of the issues raised by these developments will be touched upon later.

The dissolution of the Mongol dominium corresponds roughly to the period of the break-up in Europe of the medieval system, which had long presented a semblance of unity, particularly on the "spiritual" plane. Hence we pass to the upgrowth of the Kingdoms and nations of a modern Europe, with their congeries of interests that make up the Western situation of to-day.

The formative period of European mankind is lost in the mists of antiquity, where transient evidence points to various evolving types and cultures classed as "Mousterian," "Aurignacian," etc., by archaeologists. With post-Neolithic times we come upon its inhabitants as revealed by tradition dubiously termed history. These may be distinguished as the Nordics of Northern Europe and Scandinavia, tall, fair-haired, robust; the Celts of the mid-Continent reaching to the British Isles; a shorter dark-haired folk covering the Southern and Mediterranean area, Iberians and Pelasgians; and other intermediate types. East of the Oder and Dniester are the East Europeans or Slavs, who play a part in affairs towards the medieval period. The origins of Mediterranean culture are now a matter of high controversy which is beside our present purpose. An historic contribution comes from Greek or Hellenic sources to Art and Literature, and sea-faring; the Roman Latins add gains to civic institutions, the art of War, and engineering; and they wrest from the Semitic power of Carthage and Phœnicia the control of the Mediterranean and preserve it as a *European Sea*.

The imperium carried by Roman arms over Southern Europe and the Near East collapsed about the fifth century, A.D., under the impact of disruptive forces, internal and external. There is an eruption into its provinces of folk from beyond its northern borders through the pressure of Asiatic hordes

from the East—seeking fresh pastures, or spoil. These people had lived in separate communities when they emerge on to the historic stage. So we hear of the movement of Ostro-Goths and Visi-Goths, of Franks and Alamanni, Vandals, Longobards and Burgundians, as they break into what is now France, Spain, Italy, and even cross into Roman Africa. Anglo-Saxons invade and subjugate Britain, and sea Vikings enter the Mediterranean. A number of shifting principalities displace the Roman imperium, though its tradition was revived in another guise in the new Christendom. Meanwhile Slavonic tribes made their way into the territory of the Eastern Empire, still intact, and West Asiatics like Avars (Hungarians) and Bulgars establish themselves on the Danube and penetrate the Balkans. With the fall of the Eastern Empire these form the independent kingdoms, Serbia, Bulgaria, that later come under the rule of the Ottoman power after the conquest of Constantinople by the Muslim.

As these peoples settle in defined countries and communities they embody in their ethnical presence differences of physique, appearance, capacity, speech, custom. Though its genesis is little known, the "nationality" principle so denoted issues in a pronounced character in Europe as no mere egoistic fantasy, but a biological factor in the nature of human things: using the term here in its tribal or variation sense. It persists often under all manner of untoward circumstance and vicissitude of fortune. Where its exemplars have lived for a time as an independent community, and then by fate come under a foreign sovereignty, they cling to their historic tradition; Czechs and Hungarians under Austria, Poles after their disintegration.<sup>3</sup> The separate Christian Communities of old Turkey, which largely correspond to ethnical groups, Serbs, Croats, Bulgars, have retained their isolation under their Turkish masters, and when relieved from that incubus have returned to their peculiar affinities, and even enjoyed the privilege of quarrelling bloodily among themselves.

The growth and development out of the mass constitution of the West, Celt, Teuton, Latin, Slav, of the greater Nation States of the modern world, is connected with forces that bear vitally on the present trend of affairs, and the future outlook.

AUSTEN VERNEY.

<sup>3</sup> "A type of German minority very different from the Swabians of the Danube Valley are the Saxons of Siebenbürgen—now Rumanian subjects. This remarkable little community, which numbers to-day but 240,000 souls, has successfully resisted for nearly eight centuries all assimilating or contaminating influences. There is no other 'colony' which is more solidly German in outlook, sympathy, and habits than these so-called 'Saxons.' Actually they are not from Saxony at all, but were imported in the twelfth century as experts in Town life from the region of the Moselle. To-day nothing makes them feel more at home than a programme of folk-songs broadcast from Luxemburg. An important factor in this solidity has undoubtedly been a highly developed system of education, to which from the very earliest times they have always attached profound importance. They claim indeed to have the oldest educational system in Europe. . . . The Rumanian State regards education on this scale as a luxury, and contributes little or nothing to the upkeep of these schools, which are all Protestant Church schools. The Saxons are Protestant to a man; and the Lutheran Church is the corner-stone of their political as well as their cultural life."—*The Times*, May 1935.

Geology began turning up fossils that told extraordinary stories about the duration of life upon our planet. What storkfuges were not used to get rid of their evidence!—*Oliver Wendell Holmes: "The Poet at the Breakfast Table."*

<sup>2</sup> It was by the open route maintained under the Great Khan that the Venetian traveller, Marco Polo, was enabled to journey to China, where he was well received at the Capital by the Emperor Kubilai, grandson of Genghis, and given an official position.

## Correspondence

### FASCISM AND FREEDOM

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—In answer to a question put him at the Stadium, Liverpool, on Sunday, October 11, Sir Oswald Mosley said, "Under Fascism there will be complete religious tolerance. We recognize the right of all people to worship God in whatever manner they see fit, and we recognize the right of parents to bring up their children in their own faith." The right of parents, forsooth! Apparently the children have no rights—especially if they savour of the fundamental right to be brought up with free and open minds until they are old enough to understand. Probably Sir Oswald is fully aware of this—but doesn't care to admit it.

I passed up a written question for Sir Oswald Mosley to answer, but failed to obtain a reply. So the question remains unanswered, and what the reply might have been is a matter for conjecture. The question was this: "Do you agree that the intellectual standard of the nation cannot possibly be raised to a satisfactory level, unless denominational schools are abolished and are replaced by a purely secular education provided by the State?"

If this letter comes to Sir Oswald's notice he may provide a reply. I would draw his attention to the fact that when his meeting ended a score of people surrounded me, including three Blackshirts, who wanted to know what my question was. I told them, and every one of them, without exception, agreed that it was a highly important question, a fair one, and one deserving a reply. A Fascist response to my point should prove of peculiar interest to members of the National Secular Society, not only because the question fits in with their notions, but also because current numbers of *Blackshirt* and *Action*, seem to take it pretty well for granted that every Atheist is a Communist, a traitor to his country, a bloody revolutionary, or an out-and-out scoundrel.

It might not be out of place to tell Sir Oswald Mosley that I can introduce him to several died-in-the-wool Christians who are Communists to the backbone, and who, in fact, believe that Jesus Christ was the greatest Communist that ever lived. I shall also be pleased to introduce to Sir Oswald a good number of avowed Atheists and Agnostics whose think-boxes and ethics are a damned sight better than those of the majority of Christians. And that's not all (I might as well rub it in while I've got the chance), I can provide Sir Oswald with the names of prominent German Fascists who are Atheists and of anti-Fascists who are intensely religious. So why British Fascism's journalistic bias against the Atheist?

ERIC FRANK RUSSELL.

### MARXISM

SIR,—Without wishing to reopen the controversy on Marxism, there is a small point that I thought I should like to deal with. Namely, the supposed unexpectedness for Marxist theory of the world—revolution beginning with Russia. It was characteristic of the depth of Marx's concrete analysis that he prophesied after the Franco-Prussian War that a war would ultimately result between Germany and Russia, and that this war would "act as the midwife to the inevitable social revolution in Russia."

Both Marx and Engels prophesied with extraordinary clarity the details of the coming world-war and its consequences. The texts will be found collected in the essay, "Karl Marx and the Present," by Deborin in *Marxism and Modern Thought* (Routledge, 5s.), a work which I thoroughly recommend as an introduction to Marxism.

JACK LINDSAY.

If we take science as our sole guide, if we accept and hold fast that alone which is verifiable, the old theology must go.—*John Burroughs.*

## Obituary

MR. EDWARD KIRTON

WE regret to announce the death of Mr. Edward Kirton of North Shields, who died on Sunday, October 11. Mr. Kirton was a loyal and active supporter of the N.S.S., of which he had been a member from its early days, having seen three Presidents. He was a man of fine character, and will be greatly missed in the district, where he had advised and helped many. A Secular Service was conducted on Wednesday, October 14, by Mr. J. T. Brighton, to a large gathering of relatives and friends. He was 79 years of age.

## National Secular Society

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD OCTOBER 15, 1936

THE President, Mr. Chapman Cohen in the Chair. Also present: Messrs. A. C. Rosetti, Clifton, Wood, Saphin, Tuson, Silvester, Ebury, Preece, Elstob, Mrs. Grant, Mrs. Quinton, Junr., and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and accepted. Monthly Financial Statement presented. New members were admitted to Leeds, Edinburgh, Bradford, Kingston, West London, Bethnal Green, and the Parent Society.

Permission was given for the formation of a Branch of the Society at Kingston-on-Thames, to be known as the Kingston-on-Thames and District Branch of the N.S.S.

Following enquiries made, it was agreed that the present appointed evening for Executive meetings met the general convenience of the majority of members, and no change was made.

An application from Birmingham Branch for speakers was dealt with, and the Secretary instructed. The Secretary reported that Caxton Hall, Westminster, had been booked for a social on Saturday evening, November 28, and several items in connexion were discussed.

The President drew attention to the death of Mrs. Hornibrook, wife of Mr. F. A. Hornibrook, who is a member of the Executive. A motion was recorded expressing sincere sympathy with Mr. Hornibrook in his great loss.

It was agreed to hold the next meeting of the Executive on Thursday, November 19, and the proceedings closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,

General Secretary.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

Lecture notices must reach 61 Farrington 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, Mr. I. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.30, Sunday, Messrs. Bryant, Evans, Barnes and Tuson. *Freethinker* on sale at Kiosk. Should be ordered in advance to avoid disappointment. *Freethinker* and *Spain and the Church* on sale outside the Park gates.

#### INDOOR

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Primrose Restaurant, 66, Heath Street, Hampstead, N.W.3, one minute from Hampstead Underground Station): 7.30, Dr. Har Dayal—"Some Freethought Festivals."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Alexandra Hotel, South Side, Clapham Common, S.W.4, opposite Clapham Common Station, Underground): 7.30, Father Vincent McNabb, O.P.—"On Manners and Morals."

(Continued on page 687)

What the Church did for Spain

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(Continued from page 686)

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1) : 11.0, W. B. Curry, M.A., B.Sc.—“War, Sadism an Education.”

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.) : 7.30, G. Bedborough—“Modernism or God up-to-date.”

### COUNTRY

#### OUTDOOR.

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES AND DISTRICT BRANCH N.S.S. (The Market Place) : 7.0, A Lecture.

#### INDOOR.

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane) : 7.0, Dr. Olaf Stapledon, M.A. (West Kirby)—“Groups and Individuals.”

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Shakespeare Rooms, Edmund Street, near Livery Street) : 7.0, Mr. G. Whitehead (London)—“Freethought versus Dictatorship.”

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Freecardeners' Hall, Picardy Place, Edinburgh) : 7.0, Mr. R. T. White—“Christianity and Slavery.”

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (McLellan Galleries, 270 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow) : 7.0, Debate—“Is the Bible the Word of God?” Mr. H. W. Henderson (G.S.S.), Mr. Craigie (New Church Evidence).

LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Imperial Hotel, Briggate, Leeds) : 8.0, Mr. H. Searle—“Christianity and Morality.”

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, entrance in Christian Street, Islington, Liverpool) : 7.0, J. T. Brighton (Chester-le-Street)—“Women, Worship and Woe.”

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Green Street) : 7.0, Mr. A. Planders.

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