

# THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED by CHAPMAN COHEN •

— Founded 1881 —

Vol. LVIII.—No. 45

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 1938

PRICE THREEPENCE

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*Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums,  
Letters to the Editor, etc.*

## Views and Opinions

### Piety and the Press

THERE is an agreed lament among the parsonry of this country that Christianity is in a bad way; and for once in a while one can agree that the clergy have cause for their lamentation. For there is not a single class of the community—lawyers, doctors, actors, artists, politicians, the working-class, middle-class, upper-class, and bottom-class, in which cannot be found a proportion of men and women who distinctly and deliberately reject Christianity, and even religion as a whole. I am informed also that even among the criminal classes—at least those whom the law regards as making up the criminal classes—the once almost complete monopoly of religion in the prisons breaking down.

I have said that this departure from Christianity is characteristic of every class of the community. But there appears to be one exception. That is the world of writers for the press, in which category I place editors and regular contributors. Take a thousand of these, and hardly ever does one find an avowal of disbelief in Christianity. The absence of this would not of necessity *prove* more than it was not necessary to mention it; but it goes a deal farther. They go out of their way to associate what they consider desirable—often a synonym for what will please readers—with Christianity. Of course, this is some times qualified by the statement that “True Christianity” or “Pure Christianity” is meant, but usually shrewdness is shown by letting it go at just “Christianity.” That gives the leading or special article all the elasticity of a racing tipster summing up which horse will win the Derby. The reader is able to make the advice given fit in with any form of Christianity (or any horse) he fancies, and the writer achieves the ideal of a professional journalist—pleasing most and offending hardly any. This is, I think, a phenomenon worth remembering. It is truly remarkable that the wave of reasoned disbelief in Christianity that has swept over the country, should have left journalists and editors of papers unaffected by it. This cannot be because journalists are more foolish than other people,

or, conversely that the members of every other class or profession are more intelligent than journalists. The explanation must be sought elsewhere.

### Godless Germany?

But like the preacher, who having stated his determination to look every religious difficulty in the face, did so—and then passed on to something else, I am not now going to attempt a solution of the problem set forth. I wish to note a manifestation of this peculiar immunity of journalists from disbelief in Christianity in the light of a passage in the *Star* of a recent date. And I note it because it was in the *Star*, and as that paper is said to have a number of avowed non-Christians on its staff. The editorial in question was dealing with our possible relations with Germany, and after retailing some of the crimes of the present regime asked whether it was possible for us to live in harmony with that country, and by way of reply said:—

This is no question of theology. Germany has now become a godless State, not because of beliefs, but because of practices. Most of the ethical principles which in a country like our own has absorbed from its Christianity, good-faith, fair-play, consideration for the weak, are thrown aside with jeers.

There is more to the the same effect, and so far as an indictment of the German Nazis is concerned, I think a much more severe impeachment might easily have been framed. But I like to be fair, even to such specialists in grotesque brutality as Hitler, Goering and Company. And it is hitting below the belt to call Nazi Germany a “godless State.” Hitler is very religious. He believes he was selected by “providence for his work,” he says “God called” him on various occasions, he believes that he is carrying out the “divine plan” in what he has done and is doing, and he has never repudiated the Roman Catholic religion in which he was reared. It is true that Germany is not now an unqualified Christian State, but it is not “godless.” There has been much talk of the worship of the old “German Gods,” but it will not do to assume that a State is godless because it has not the *same* god to whom worship is given in the *Star* office. To do so is carrying sectarianism to its limit. Odin, Thor and Company were and are just as much gods as any others. They came into existence in much the same way as the Christian god, they were kept alive in the same way as the Christian god, and if any test can be devised to test these gods, I will undertake to prove from unquestionable history that we have as much and as strong evidence in favour of the Northern gods as the *Star* can produce on behalf of the Jerusalem one. These old German gods controlled the weather, they gave good harvests, they brought victory in war, they did all the things that the Christian god did, or does, and just as well. Germany is not godless. It may be inhuman, brutal, dishonest, untruthful, but it is not godless. It really is a religious State.

### Be Just to Christianity

In its indignation the *Star* is not merely unjust to Germany and its gods, it is also unjust to Christianity. It asserts, by implication, that Christianity could not have provided Hitler and Co., with incentives to and examples for their behaviour. I quite agree that the brutality exhibited by the Christian Church never assumed the cold-blooded bestial cruelty of the Nazi Yahoos, or that it ever laid itself out for the degradation of a whole people, or made special warfare on children, or insisted upon the duty of the very young to join in its brutal work. Still Christianity did make persecution one of its instruments of government, it did socially ostracize the heretic, and it did confiscate his goods; it did take as a motto that no faith should be kept with heretics, and it was no poor hand at placing a great deal of so-called history before the world that came near to being as untruthful as the history with which young Germany has been supplied. And there were many occasions in which the frenzy for slaughtering the non-Christian matched the German treatment of the anti-Nazis. For example, there were the Crusades. These were "holy wars," if ever there were any, and out of many similar examples of the conduct of the Christian army, blessed by Popes, led by priests, and which offered up solemn prayer before going into battle, I take a short summing up of the conquest of the "Holy City," and the scenes about the Mosque of Omar:—

Such was the carnage in the Mosque of Omar that the mutilated carcasses were hurled by the torrents of blood into the court; dis severed arms and hands floated into the current that carried them into contact with the bodies to which they belonged. Ten thousand people were murdered. . . It was not only the lacerated and headless trunks which shocked the sight, but the figures of the victors themselves reeking with the blood of their slaughtered enemies . . . women with children at the breast, girls and boys, all were slaughtered. The squares, the streets, and even the uninhabited places of Jerusalem were strewn with the dead bodies of men and women and the mangled limbs of children.

After all, it is not fair to take anything away from the historic glory of the Church merely because it did not use rubber truncheons for beating people to death, or concentration camps in which they could be tortured at leisure. These are mere details.

\* \* \*

### Man and Morals

We enter a rather calmer atmosphere when we note the belief of the *Star*, that we owe our professed virtues to Christianity. To the assumption that the world has learned the value of truth, justice, care for others, regard for the weak and so forth, Hitler might well and truthfully reply that if the Nazis ever wished to cultivate these virtues they have no need whatever to go to Christianity, for neither the British nor any other people had to wait for Christianity or the Church to teach them. These virtues existed with the people of these islands before Christianity was born. In some form or other and to some degree they exist with every group of human beings. They are not qualities which one group of humans learns from another group, they form the essential conditions of human life, and are inherited, in their essence, from man's semi-animal ancestors. Some amount of care for others, some amount of good faith, some amount of mutual trust, some amount of kindly actions, some regard for truth, some amount of fair-play must always exist if people are to live together. Of course there are differences in the position held by particular qualities in the scale of values. Among the primitive Esquimaux Nansen found unkindness to children almost unknown. We have to make laws and run voluntary

associations to prevent children being ill-treated. Primitive peoples are not habitually untruthful, we have scores of situations, from the office of Prime Minister downwards, where lying is made a part of public duty. There are different forms of family life, but in the main there are certain features of family life that are present everywhere. For the *Star* to assert that the British people owe their respect for the fundamental virtues to Christianity is very, very, crude, and very uncomplimentary to human nature as a whole. Granted the advisability in the case of an ordinary evening newspaper not doing anything seriously to hurt Christian prejudices, something less crude might have been attempted. Christianity might have been credited with merely strengthening these fundamental social qualities, but to be told that we owe them to Christianity, is crude enough for "Jimmy" Douglas or the Bishop of London. For the benefit of the writer of the *Star* editorial, I may give him the following brief outline of the subject from Prof. F. J. Holmes, a very eminent Zoologist, and who is *not* an avowed Free-thinker:—

The foundations of moral life lie deeply rooted in the domestic and social instincts, which form the main-springs of action in animals and men alike. We do not speak of sympathy, mutual helpfulness or parental love as parts of our so-called animal nature, although in consistency we should do so, for these traits are as much a part of the nature of animals as ferocity and greed. It is traits such as affection, sympathy and group loyalty that constitute the basis of our moral impulses and sentiments. Like the lower animals, we are in general sympathetic and helpful to our kind. To our enemies and the enemies of our country we are hostile, and often cruel. All this is human nature. It is also animal nature. In man and animals love and sympathy, courage and cowardice, self-sacrifice and selfishness, loyalty and deception, play much the same part in determining behaviour. We play the game of life less simply and crudely than the animals, but our fundamental interests in life are much the same.

There is, of course, the fact that with the animal there is no craving for circulation, nor a financially profitable belief in the stupidity of the largest number.

I find that I have not dealt with the question of why the army of newspaper editors and regular contributors are, on the face of things, so far behind every other social group where a knowledge of the nature of religion is concerned. But that can wait. Or perhaps the question is sufficiently simple for anyone to find an answer.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### BARCELONA IN WAR TIME

The next day was a Sunday. I had read in the American papers that all the churches were burnt or destroyed, and all religious services were forbidden. I went to a chapel in the Calle de Pines and I attended a crowded Mass. The organ played and a choir sang the old Christian hymns of Catalunya. No police protected the chapel. It did not need to be protected. None dreamt of disturbing the church service. No one dreamt of stopping the believer from going in.

Later I went to the Cathedral, which was only a couple of hundred steps distant; a short time before the so-called defenders of religion had bombed and destroyed the marvellous door of the West Entrance.

Only few people realize that three thousand Catholic priests live undisturbed in Barcelona; that every week two thousand Masses are read in private houses. The Republican Government is prepared to allow the reopening of the churches; the opposition comes from high functionaries of the Church, who are opposed to this not on religious, but political, grounds.

Ernst Toller, in the "New Statesman and Nation."

## The Bradlaugh of America

"The infidels of one age have been the aureole saints of the next."—Ingersoll.

"He locked the ranks, he launched the van  
Straight at the grinning Teeth of Things."

Kipling.

WILLST Bradlaugh and his able colleagues were carrying the message of Freethought to every corner of the British Isles, Robert Ingersoll was flaming the same gospel over the United States of America. That is, indeed, the fit description of that coruscating genius who did so much for Transatlantic Rationalism.

An advanced movement like our own can have no better champion than a humorist. No human emotion is so readily awakened as that of which laughter is the sign. And if the cause be a great one, and if the arguments, barbed by wit and winged by and if the arguments, barbed by wit and winged by laughter, have any real worth, they strike the deeper and take the stouter hold because of the humorous nature of their presentation.

In a theological discussion a laugh is a blessing, and a laugh-maker like Ingersoll was our benefactor. The artificial solemnity of the subject makes a joke more jocund, as the arms of a dusky maid give an added beauty to her pearls. The defenders of that transcendent imposture known as Christianity have lost themselves in trackless deserts of so-called evidence, and almost smothered the subject in oceans of verbiage. But Ingersoll challenged Orthodoxy with a smile. There was no point of real importance upon which he did not touch wittily. There were few fallacies in that enormous tissue of falsehoods which he did not laughingly expose. Nowhere is he so happy as when he describes how religion grew out of the hotbeds of ignorance and fraud. Although a master of the lash, he used his whip caressingly. He does not cut his subject to ribbons like Swift, nor, like Voltaire, sting like a thousand wasps. Rather is he a Voltaire into whom has passed the suavity of Renan. It is a mellowed and transformed Voltaire, looking upon a busier world with the laughing eyes we know so well. That was one of the many reasons why Ingersoll had such bitter enemies among the geese of Orthodoxy, who sought for so many years to hiss him down. The defenders of the faith realized only too well that it is ridicule that kills. Gravity was what they wanted, for they knew that opponents who treat religion seriously only play their sorry game for them.

Ingersoll occupied the position as a Freethought leader in the United States which Bradlaugh filled here. Both were big men physically and intellectually; both could sway huge audiences by their oratory; but here the resemblance ends. Bradlaugh sought to beat down Christianity by sheer force of logic and law. His speeches read like a judicial summing-up by the side of the brilliant, sparkling orations of Ingersoll. America dearly loves rhetoric, and the Colonel had no equal on the American continent. He dealt rhetorically with elemental emotions, and he enjoyed the fame of being an apostle of Freedom. Expressing the simple feelings of plain folk, he made an universal appeal. "Give me liberty, or give me death!" That was the kind of thing; a sonorous and impassioned phrase flung out to thrill the hearts and flush the cheeks of thousands. Phrase after phrase has this special quality, and reads like poetry, grandiose and sweeping:—

"Liberty, a word without which all other words are vain."

You can almost see the impressive head, the outstretched arm, hear the thrilling, resonant voice. There is more than music in it, for the trumpets sing to battle.

Ingersoll wrote, too, quite as brilliant and delightful a style as his spoken words. He was "answered" over and over again by angry ministers of all denominations. He debated in print with Gladstone and Cardinal Manning, his reply to the latter (reprinted as *Rome or Reason?*) being a little masterpiece. In the debate with Gladstone, the English politician taunted Ingersoll with riding a horse without a bridle. The Colonel retorted, crushingly, that this was far better than "riding a dead horse in a reverential calm." Huxley claimed the victory for Ingersoll. "Gladstone's attack on you," he wrote, "is one of the best things he has written. There is no more than fifty per cent more verbiage than is necessary, nor any sentence with more than two meanings."

Ingersoll's masterpiece, *Some Mistakes of Moses*, is a Freethought classic, and still commands a huge circulation wherever the English language is spoken. Indeed, a generation after his death his lectures are still widely read, and his writings have been collected in the handsome volumes known as the Dresden Edition. Such literary vitality is the surest test of power, for, as a rule, controversial matter is seldom endowed so richly as to survive the purpose of the moment.

An amusing story is told concerning the popularity of these books. Ingersoll, who was a lawyer, had occasion to refer in court to a work, *Moses, On the Law of Mandamus*. The judge smilingly interposed by asking if this were the same Moses in whom the Colonel had found so many mistakes. "No! your honour," came the retort. "I am referring to Moses on the Law of Mandamus. The other book to which you refer is Moses on God damn us."

Imagination and humour were the qualities in which Ingersoll surpassed all the orators of his time; but his humour was most unassailable work. A handful of his jests are, perhaps, the finest contribution to Freethought literature since Voltaire made men smile at the Christian superstition. How good is his joke that "with soap, baptism is a good thing." Being asked if it were true that he feared to meet certain of the clergy, he replied cheerfully that he was willing to meet all the clergy of Christendom. Whilst he had a law-office at Washington, lightning struck a church close to his office. Ingersoll said: "An offended deity may have intended that thunderbolt for my office, but what marksmanship!" In response to an inquiry about Robert Collyer, he said: "Had such men as Collyer and John Stuart Mill been present at the burning of Socrates, they would have extinguished the flames with their tears. Had the Presbytery of Chicago been present, they would have turned their backs, divided their coat-tails, and warmed themselves." Showing a friend a handsome set of Voltaire's works in his library, Ingersoll was asked what was the price he paid for it. "Those books cost me the Governorship of Illinois," was the witty, but unexpected, reply. In truth, a man of his enormous ability and extraordinary personality might have been President of the United States, but for the opposition of the pious Barbarians, and the plutocratic Churches.

I like that story of the first meeting of Ingersoll with G. W. Foote. They were dining together, and Foote had passed the oysters. "Not like oysters, Foote?" said Ingersoll, "that's the only fault I can find in you." A lesser man might have been jealous of the great English Freethought leader, who made such a sensation with his opening address in New York that he was pressed to remain for a lengthy tour by the lecture agencies.

At heart a poet, Ingersoll adorned everything that he wrote or spoke. His was a genius in which intellectual liberty appeared as beautiful a thing as a flower, a bird, or a star. He found the world a place of ethical ideals, and he was no less exalted when he

stripped the tinsel from Napoleon, who bestrode Europe like a Colossus, as when he described the exquisite beauty of a little child's laugh, the joyous sound "that fills the eyes with light, and every heart with joy."

A thorough humanitarian, Ingersoll's work is full of a fine and noble indignation directed against all that is cruel and despicable in religion. From tens of thousands of minds he lifted the awful belief in a burning hell and everlasting torment, and banished those perfectly degrading ideas of deity which oppressed so many of his countrymen.

Ingersoll's enormous influence and personal qualities are recognized. Frederick Douglass, the one-time slave, himself a Christian, has borne testimony to the welcome he met at Ingersoll's home when no one else in Illinois would take the negro in. His own antagonist, Gladstone, admitted that the Colonel wrote with "a rare and enviable brilliancy." Mark Twain, one of America's greatest writers, admired Ingersoll "this side idolatry." One thing, at least, tributes like this prove, they help to refute the absurdities of those creatures who pretend that Robert Ingersoll was a common-place antagonist. The Ingersoll we treasure in our hearts was a fine soldier, as well as a fine man, who fought in the Army of Liberty, and who held the banner of Freethought for a whole generation against the enmity of millions.

MIMNERMUS.

## Christian Intrusion in China

In the sixteenth century Spanish voyagers in the Far East annexed the Philippine Islands. There they encountered Chinese navigators and traders, whose business ability impeded the commercial monopoly they themselves were eager to establish. Then, as now, the mailed fist was fashionable, and a wholesale massacre of the Orientals followed, in which 20,000 people are said to have perished. Both Spanish and Portuguese invaders displayed a combination of zealotry and avarice which compelled the Chinese to regard them as Christian devils. For when the foreign ships entered Chinese harbours they were loaded with arms and ammunition, and carried fanatical priests passionately bent on the compulsory conversion of the natives to the Catholic creed.

As Mr. E. R. Hughes reminds us in his extremely interesting and instructive *Invasion of China by the Western World* (A. & C. Black, 1937, 15s. net): "These were the days of the Inquisition in Southern Europe and America, and the secular and ecclesiastical were one force for the glory of God and the increase of wealth and power for his most Christian servants. If a Chinese port did not welcome the visitors, or trade was not to their liking, they had no scruples about the use of violence. Thus to the Chinese they appeared as nothing but marauding pirates."

Christian missionary effort has been in almost constant operation for centuries in China, and still its people are not saved. Out of a population of approximately 450 millions there are only three million nominal Christians, many of whom have been converted by the cultural, medical and economic advantages open to devotees. Our author, who is Reader in Chinese Religion and Philosophy in the University of Oxford, doubts, indeed, whether any considerable section of the Oriental converts finds the foreign faith other than an ill-fitting garment. Moreover, the Catholic missions hold themselves aloof from the heretical Protestant enterprises, and these in their turn are frequently at variance. Now, however, that Freethought has

gained ground in China, the various rival missions display a greater tendency to coalesce.

Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism were the leading cults in China when the Western invaders arrived. As Buddhism was an Indian philosophy there was little novelty in the preaching of an alien creed, especially as Chinese contact with Nestorian Christianity commenced in the seventh century when a church of this heretical persuasion was founded which endured for over two centuries.

The Franciscan thirteenth century mission soon expired, but in the sixteenth, Jesuits arrived who were aware of the Chinese veneration for scholarship and accordingly despatched emissaries proficient in the astrophysics of the West. One of these was the Italian, Matteo Ricci, a diplomatic priest who persuaded the Imperial Power to permit the establishment of a mission in Peking. So influential did Ricci and his German and Iberian associates become, that in 1611 the Son of Heaven commissioned them to reform the Chinese Calendar, a task never previously entrusted to anyone save the Emperor himself.

The Jesuits traversed most of China and artfully adapted their teachings to native predilections. They condoned ancestor-worship and the sacrifices to Confucius, but this accommodating policy infuriated the merciless Dominicans who had founded missions in Southern Cathay, while the Portuguese officials viewed the fathers as meddling interlopers. Consequently, the Jesuits were denounced as tricksters to the Pope of Rome, and a religious wrangle, accompanied by hatred and detraction convulsed the Catholics in China for a century. Contradictory Papal pronouncements were sent in succession until the Chinese ruler was utterly sick of the whole squabble. At last, in 1706, a legate from Rome arrived with instructions to terminate the conflict. This was resented as an encroachment on Imperial prerogative by a foreign priest and an edict was issued dismissing all missionaries unless they adopted the procedure of the Jesuits. At this, the Roman Pope with matchless audacity issued a Bull enjoining every Catholic in China to ignore this instruction on pain of excommunication. The political ambitions of the Papacy now became evident, and Rome's declared desire to establish a universal religion was deemed a mere device to attain predominance in the Chinese dominions.

Catholic observances were now made illegal, and so continued until 1860. Still, in the intervening years, missionaries and their converts remained in the country, and despite sporadic penalization mass was secretly celebrated, and new arrivals contrived to enter China. Such converts that were made in these circumstances were seemingly "men and women of simple piety and uneducated habits of thought."

The earliest Protestant missionary, Robert Morrison, came to Canton in 1807, and was appointed translator to the East India Company. His official position enabled him to influence Chinese circles, and this was accentuated when, in 1816, he proceeded with Lord Amherst's embassy to Peking. Yet, during his twenty-seven years residence in China he baptized ten natives only, although he established a seminary and printing press, and translated the Scriptures into Chinese. Other Western emissaries arrived and numbered twenty-five in 1840, but converts were below a hundred. Gutzlaff, the agent of the Netherlands Missionary Society, was a well-meaning and ingenious evangelist inspired with a passion to inundate China with Biblical texts and tracts, and he soon found natives anxious to assist him in his pious enterprise. "But not for the last time," notes Hughes, "a trusting foreigner was deceived. It was later discovered that the majority of these 'preachers' had never got

further than the opium dens of Hong-Kong, and had sold their literature back to the printer."

European pressure having opened the treaty ports, missionaries soon settled in them. Churches, schools and hospitals were erected and services conducted. But the Chinese officials regarded missionaries and the pushful species of foreign traders with a suspicion very largely justified by the curious conduct of some of the Western visitors.

The founders of the missionary societies of the eighteenth century and later, were mainly ignorant and intolerant pietists, who believed that, apart from Christ's saving grace, there was no possible escape from damnation. Even a relatively enlightened evangelist such as Morrison stigmatized the Chinese as "ignorant, deluded, guilty men." As Hughes remarks: "The call of foreign missions, as is very vividly seen in the missionary appeals of those days, was that myriads of one's fellow-men were standing on the brink of hell, and it was only the preacher of the gospel with his message of grace who could save them."

Conversion proceeded slowly until a wave of religious emotion invaded a section of the people which culminated in the Taiping rebellion. A Chinese convert, Hung Hsiu-Ch'ian, imagined that he had been commissioned in a vision to destroy idolatry and bring the people to Christ. Hung appears to have been mesmerized by Protestant preachers and pious publications, and he apparently supposed that he and his associates were founding a Christian State in heathen surroundings.

It is estimated that 100,000 Taipings were marching under Hung's banner. This amazing movement gravely embarrassed the Protestant missions while, in view of its heretical origin, it was disavowed by the Catholics. Some adventurous Protestants gave them encouragement, but most hesitated, when the Christian Powers instructed their secular and spiritual agents to lend the Taipings no support whatever. All the missionaries complied with this command, although Mr. Hughes deems it unfortunate that so fervent a Christian as General Gordon should have been sent to suppress an insurrection that might have transformed China into a State "at least as Christian as that of Constantine." In the light of Gibbon's *History*, comment on this is scarcely necessary.

Missionaries were responsible for considerable mischief. Many riots occurred, in which lives were lost and property destroyed. This last, the Chinese were compelled to make good. Moreover, "at some conferences of missionaries it was urged that these indemnities should be deliberately made heavy in order that they might act as deterrents." Naturally the greater the burden thus imposed on the Chinese, the more they detested the Christians and their creed.

In such circumstances many marvelled that conversions were still made. Educational advantages, medical treatment and food rations accounted for many nominal conversions, while in all parts of China discontent prevailed, and many turned to an alien faith in despair.

The I Ho Tuan, better known, in Western lands, as the Boxers, broke out into open rebellion in Northern China in 1900. Home misgovernment coupled with grave concern at the increasing foreign interferences and the domineering attitude of many missionaries precipitated the upheaval. The number of those who perished during the conflict remains conjectural, but it is said that more than 200 missionaries and thousands of native converts were killed. The insurrection was mendaciously magnified in the sensational section of the European and American Press. Reprisals were passionately demanded, and action of a character that shocked the sensibilities of humani-

tarian observers was taken. Peking was looted both by the foreign soldiers and civilians.

In his *Historical Introduction* to his volume, Mr. Hughes tells us that: "The troops marched over all the province, taking toll of life and property as they willed, without distinguishing friend or foe." Also the Chinese people were subjected to a shameful humiliation which affected millions in no way responsible for the disturbances, and the State was condemned to furnish an indemnity of £67,500,000 to the foreign Powers.

These high-handed proceedings constrained the Chinese to regard the representatives of Christian States with fear and resentment. Again, the introduction of works disclosing the discoveries of modern science and containing scholarly criticism of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures induced thoughtful and intelligent Chinese to estimate Western religion at its real value.

The better instructed missionaries themselves had also been broadened and enlightened by the cultural advance. But the appearance in translation in China and the studies of Chinese abroad of the writings of Tylor, Huxley, Frazer, Grant Allen and other humanists exercised a potent influence on the Chinese intelligentsia. Above all, as Mr. Hughes notes: "Darwin's results, followed by Herbert Spencer's adaptation, had permeated the minds of educated people, and the time had come for purely secular philosophies of history, of which the most striking was that propounded by Marx and Engels."

By 1922 it was obvious that young China had completely abandoned any previous inclination to compromise with Christianity. The eminent rationalist philosophers, Prof. John Dewey and Bertrand Russell now became the favoured exemplars of the enlightened. Religion was more and more regarded as an opiate for popular consumption. Missionary undertakings were everywhere derided as schemes to stupefy the minds of the masses. "The word 'opium,'" remarks our author, "had a special barb in it, for the critics went to history and traced out the contemporaneous (more or less) arrival of opium and Protestant missionaries."

T. F. PALMER.

## The Power and The Glory

As we look round the world we see many things: shoes and ships and sealing-wax, and cabbages and kings. The first three items in this list are manufactured and inanimate; cabbages and kings are alive, they grow, and they have volition. The will of a cabbage is, of course, on a very low plane and perhaps unconscious. That of a king can also be not very highly developed; history records many *rois fainçants*. But at its utmost development the will of a king is probably the greatest influence on the lives of all of us sub-lunary beings. The word king includes a variety of human-beings; there are kings anointed and crowned, uncrowned kings are often met with in these days, and there are, of course, copper kings and pea-nut kings who share honours in the popular press with sugar barons and czars of the movies. One thing is common to all these kings, that is the possession of power beyond that exercised by the ruck of their fellow humans. This power may be exercised consciously; in fact it generally is. Further, it may be exercised on, or against, "Nature," i.e., the non-human external world; but it is generally exercised on, or against, us, the common men and women, and almost always consciously. In a word, the kings have the power to impose their wills upon their subjects, they wish to use that power, and, generally, they do so.

Now, the exercise of this kingly power upon us may be a good or a bad thing. Good or bad for the kings, good or bad for us, their subjects; bad for the king and good for the subjects; good for the king and, too often, bad for his subjects; and, on occasion, good for both king and subjects.

The study of kingly power is therefore one that concerns us all. Power is not exercised in a vacuum, it is exercised on human bodies. Like it or not, we are affected in all our activities by this power which descends upon us from above. This descending power may be in the form of a dove, but it has the beak and claws of the eagle and the hawk. What, let us enquire, is the reaction of the subjects to this visitation?

Well, readers, I am sure you will agree that this descent of power influences the great mass of our fellow subjects as the rain, frost, sunshine and slugs affect the cabbage. The cabbage, being a living thing, reacts to these stimuli in a mute, negative way—there is little that a cabbage can do about it. In like manner, the mass of mankind react to the orders which descend upon us from above. They submit. Having been endowed by nature with a vocal organ they may relieve their feelings by grumbling, but—they submit. They are on a somewhat higher plane than the cabbage, at any rate, they tell themselves so, and are told so by the kings and the kings' agents, but, so far as the mass is concerned, they submit. For their good, or the king's good, they submit, and that is that.

But there are other and more intelligent subjects, you and I. What about us? How do we react? By flight? Or by fight? Or by submission for the time being? Well, I suppose we must admit, we, the more thoughtful subjects, having weighed up the two former alternatives and deciding that they are not feasible, or, at least, not feasible for us, decide on submission for the time being. This suits the ruler quite well; he will see to it that the time being shall have something of the Christian quality of life everlasting. Let us be honest with ourselves, we intellectuals, and own up to the doubtless painful fact that submission for the time being is only a rationalization of our sense of helplessness, not to say our cold feet. We need feel no great shame in this submission; to yield to *force majeure* is a matter of daily occurrence in our troubled world; even the Chamberlains must yield to the Hitlers; and the legal authorities everywhere recognize that promises extracted under constraint and duress are not valid. But when all is said and done, yielding to superior force is submission, and we had better recognize it as such.

As for flight, as we have hinted, there are no Cities of Refuge, no Alsacias, in these days. That "little lazy isle" in the Pacific is now ruled by an Assistant Deputy Commissioner. Until interplanetary travel becomes possible, and the Moon Rocket Co., Ltd., begin their operations, there is no help to be looked for in flight. There still remains, of course, flight into illness or escapism into art, but even then we have to descend the stairs of our ivory tower twice a year to pay the rate-collector. And we have to earn the money to pay these rates. In other words, to be a "wage-slave."

There still remains the hero. The hero, the defier of kings, the blasphemer of the gods. Ajax, defying the lightning. But we know what happened to the temerous son of Oileus; he was swallowed up by the waves that he did not defy! The king motions to the captain of the guard; we are haled to the dungeon; we disappear; and that also is that.

What, then, shall we do to be saved? All avenues of escape seem to be closed, defiance means death, and submission (to the hero) worse than death. The outlook is black indeed and a pessimism more black than

Schopenhauer's seems justified. The more the thoughtful man with a will of his own dwells upon his predicament the more hopeless appears his situation. In his despair, enters to him the Religionist. To the man facing the slings and arrows of unwanted kingly commands, to him who struggles Laocoon-wise with punishment sent for putting his fellows wise (he dared to warn the Trojans against admitting the wooden horse: his punishment we have all seen in the famous Vatican statuary group), to these, I say, engulfed in pessimism comes the Christian or the Buddhist with their panaceas. The Christian says: submit, endure, you will have "pie in the sky when you die." The Buddhist says: submit, endure, it is *karma* which you must endure in this incarnation, for the time being that is. And being but weak humans we listen, and listening we are lost. We submit, the king has his will, and we provide a livelihood to that successful li-jacker on kingship, the universal priest.

We are lost indeed if that is all. BUT IT IS NOT ALL. There is a way of escape. This Path, this Tao, has nothing to do with religion, with otherworldliness. It is here and now; it is human and possible; it is simple. It needs but courage and intelligence to attain. Freethinkers will know this way-out, but we must proclaim it to all who can and will hear. It is nothing less than that we ourselves must be kings. Simple, isn't it; like all great ideas. The hero must be king. The cabbages must be what they can, but the hero must and can be king.

Easier said than done. Of course; but things are sometimes easier done than said. It is easier for the Englishman in Tibet to eat than to ask for food. Naturally it will not be an easy job that of gaining kingly power, nor, of course, keeping it when got. But nothing worth-while was obtained easily, and we will certainly not obtain kingship if we listen to cheap sneers about things being easier said than done. If we screw our courage to the sticking place we may fail, as did Macbeth, who uttered these words. If we do, we can at least give Macduff a rare drubbing. But if we succeed, we shall have both the Power and the Glory. A glittering prize.

And this kingly power? Our old friend, Democracy. Democracy, rarely seen, but always realizable by heroes. Democracy, worth dying for, but much, much more worth living for and serving. Democracy, the sharing of kingly power.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

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#### THE "VORACIOUS CREDULITY" OF JOHN WESLEY

... He was the dupe of his own devout emotions, which, in a certain mood, might as well have been excited by the music of an organ, or the warbling of a skylark. But he was sometimes imposed on by relations which were worthy to have figured in the Sancta Sanctorum. One of his preachers pretended to go through the whole service of the Meeting, in his sleep—singing, preaching, and even discoursing with a clergyman who came in and reasoned with him during his exhibition, and affected to know nothing of what he had done during the night. And Wesley could believe this, and ask seriously by what principle of philosophy it was to be explained! ... In the history of this remarkable man, nothing is more remarkable than his voracious credulity. He accredited and repeated stories of apparitions, and witchcraft and possession, so silly, as well as monstrous, that they might have nauseated the coarsest appetite for wonder; this too, when the belief on his part was wholly gratuitous, and no motive can be assigned for it except the pleasure of believing.—"Life of Wesley," by Robert Southey, LL.D. (Vol II. p. 198.)

## Acid Drops

Professor Leonard Hill says very emphatically that Britain must have more babies. We agree with him. Unless we do have more babies a deal of our present-day labours will be wasted. London and other centres of population are now studded with underground shelters from bombs, and gas masks have been distributed by the million. What is the use of these things if we do not produce more babies to be bombed or gassed? How can we have wars on the grand scale if we do not have myriads of babies who can become soldiers? How can we, or Germany, demand ownership of a larger part of the earth than we have if we do not produce more babies than can be reared at home? How can we have an unemployed question, with an army of directors and several Cabinet Ministers to attend to them, if we permit the number of babies born to decline? All the preparations we have made and are making cannot outlast more than a single generation unless we see to it that the baby population is increased. Our present civilization depends upon our producing more and more babies. Our armament works, our Cabinet Ministers who look after them, all depend upon more babies. The up-to-date slogan should be "More and More Babies."

Seeing that Hitler has had the appointment of the chief officials in Czechoslovakia, has issued notice to this country that he can only promise friendly relations with us so long as Churchill, Duff Cooper and Lloyd George are not given office, and has now issued a similar warning to France with regard to a change of Government, may it not be advisable for all parliamentary candidates in Britain who support the present Government to have printed at the top of their election posters, "Our candidature has the approval of Hitler, Goering, Goebbels and Streicher?" It is just as well to be on the safe side, and to know where we are.

The first handful of refugees from Sudetenland arrived in London on Monday last. They possessed practically nothing but what they stood up in, and even then did not dare disclose the way by which they escaped. Death awaits all who are caught, and Germany is as keen as ever on getting all known Socialists, Freethinkers, and anti-Nazis in its power. There are daily vacancies occurring in the concentration camps, and the Nazi gaolers must have the supply of material kept up otherwise their efficiency in torture is likely to become deadened.

In the recent expulsion of Polish Jews and others from Germany, a number of children were thrust over the border and machine guns fired over their heads to quicken their movements. They were also told that if they returned they would be shot. We hope that Lord Halifax, Chamberlain, and Sir Samuel Hoare, will take this as a further example of Hitler's peaceful intentions, and his desire to be on good terms with England—until he has done what he wishes with other people.

The *Evening Standard* of October 25 informs us that during June, July, and August 5,000 Germans registered themselves as converts to Islam. The *Standard* also points out that Germany has now taken over the rôle of protectors of the Mohammedans. This may help to explain the trouble in Palestine, and may be regarded as Hitler's return for Mr. Chamberlain's confidence in him and his own contribution to the peace of the world. No one, not even Lord Halifax, will claim that these Germans would have dared to have registered themselves as Mohammedans without the sanction, if not by the command, of the German Government.

Movements in the political world over the past two or three years form an interesting topic to the student of social psychology. First there was a campaign which aimed at the creation of a sense of safety and confidence in the Government. We had the fastest planes, the finest long range guns, etc., with hints of other preparations

that would come as a very unwelcome surprise to anyone who dared attack Britain. This was followed by a very successful campaign of fear, and in order to reconcile the people to the Munich surrender, it was made public that we were not prepared at all, in fact, we were hopelessly outclassed by Germany and Italy. Mr. Chamberlain had saved us not merely from war, but from extinction, and for the moment the majority were hysterically grateful. Now that this campaign has done its work we are in the first stages of another one of trust—trust the Government, trust everybody in power, beware of any alterations in that direction, and all will be well. Make any drastic change and we risk destruction.

All this is extremely interesting, and, if properly used, instructive. And if full benefit is to be gained the study must be followed without any political leanings. For, on this there should be no delusion, whatever change of Government may be affected, without a more wide-awake and a better educated public the same game will be played. 1914-18 brought the instrument of a scientific psychological propaganda into full play. It taught the world the power of propaganda pursued on particular lines, and controlled by those in power. Germany, Italy, Russia, gave the world different forms of the same lesson, namely, that a people may be led in any direction if a particular plan is adopted. Those who observed saw in the case of Edward VIII. a king converted by a subsidized propaganda from a darling of the people to one whose conduct made him unfitted for the throne. It has seen Hitler and Goering, or, rather Goering and Hitler, converted into almost angels of peace, in spite of their blaring that all they have taken is due to their guns and bombing planes. The study of the situation, while it must include a study of political action, is not actually a political one. It is a study in social psychology, and it is upon a general knowledge of this and the applications of it being in the right hands, that the future of Europe, if not the world, rests.

The *Church Times* scorns the assumption that it accepts as historic fact the story of Jonah and the Whale. That is so much to the good, although it might have mentioned with gratitude those Freethinkers who forced the Church thus far on the road to sanity. But the *Church Times* still accepts the actual existence of the legions of devils associated with Christian teaching. It also believes in the conflict between Jesus and the Devil. What we should like to know is exactly what substantial difference there is between belief in Jonah and the Whale, and Jesus and the Devil that one may be accepted and the other rejected. We have the same evidence for the one story as we have for the other. Why this fastidious taste?

The recent death at Brighton of Mr. Massingham, a pioneer of electricity, recalls that he

was accused of working with the devil when he began to carry out his experiments with electric light.

He once told a *Star* reporter: "Good orthodox religious people thought I was trying to discover what God had never intended should be made known.

"When I installed electric lighting in Bristol Cathedral for a musical festival, I was strongly condemned by religious people who thought it sacrilegious to introduce electricity into a place of worship.

"Everything was done to stop me developing electricity and protest meetings were held."

After all, we *do* progress—the more religion is confounded by facts.

Either a sense of humour or a lack of it must be responsible for some of the Church notices. Here is one:—

Pie Supper  
Concert with Sketch  
"Billy's Aunt"

and under it a cross with an inscription

He died for me

But whether the cause of death was the play or the pie is not told.

In the teeth of a fierce gale, Mrs. Ada Milton, of Broxbourne, Herts, ran to the point of collapse and averted an accident to an L.N.E.R. train carrying 150 passengers. At Liverpool Street Station, London, she was presented with a cheque for ten guineas. (Yes, TEN GUINEAS!) Such a reward seemed to have overwhelmed a pressman, for he asked her WHAT SHE INTENDED TO DO WITH THE MONEY! Instead of slapping the face of the impertinent fellow, she said: "That I don't know, but we need it. We have four children, and my husband is still unemployed." It is high time this disgusting impudence of pressmen asking worthy recipients of rewards, winners of competitions, and others who reap some unexpected fortune, "What will you do with your money?" was stopped. A decent press proprietary would see to it. Till then the victim of these "interviewers" should reply: "How do you spend your wages, my little man?"

Dean Inge thinks that some medical knowledge should be imparted to students in all theological colleges. Agreed, but it should be of the right kind. Students should be taught that much of what is considered proof of a religious faculty or quality is fully explained in terms of abnormal or pathological mental states. They should be taught how much of perverted sex feeling lies behind such as the Oxford Group movement, and how the visions of saints and monks and nuns, and the feeling of "divine ecstasy," may all be brought under the headings already named. We made an attempt to deal with this huge subject in our *Religion and Sex*, but one could not expect that book to be available for students in theological seminaries. If it were, there would be precious few candidates for the ministry.

There is one theological institution in which the students do learn something of medicine. That is in theological colleges. But here the instruction is intended for use among "uncivilized" peoples, and so becomes the means of further religious deception. For the small amount of medical science that is absorbed is used as evidence of the hundred and one absurdities of the Christian religion. It is not the aim of the missionary college to benefit the native, but to turn him into a Christian, and so the cure of the simplest ailment becomes a means of bringing to the native belief in the miraculous cures of Jesus Christ.

A row has been going on in the Paddington Borough Council over the letting of Porchester Hall to meetings of German Nazis. During the discussion on the Council it was announced that a German passport is necessary to gain admission to these meetings, and those Germans who do not attend when ordered to do so may have their passports cancelled. Knowing how very carefully Germans in this country are watched by Hitler's agents, what they read, the Company they keep, etc., we are quite ready to accept the statements made. Probably one day the Prime Minister may receive a demand from Hitler for the autonomy of the Germans in London. But it will not be done quite so openly as the broadcast warning given the British Government against admitting Eden, Churchill, and Lloyd George to any share in the Government of the country. Shades of Gladstone and Beaconsfield! What would they have said to that piece of impudence? But this did not bring even a rebuke.

There are evidently ways of making Germany call a halt. Seven or eight months ago the Government of Germany placed a charge of 13s. 6d. for giving a visa to all passports held by visitors. Since then there has been a falling off in the number of visitors, which is put down to the extra 13s. 6d., and it has now been removed. We hope for the sake of British human nature that this is not the cause of the falling off of British visitors to Germany, but that it is rather due to an awakening of something like the policy we were advocating in the "Views and Opinions" last week. Left alone the German people are a very admirable people, and its magnificent old cities and lovely scenery are enough to please anyone. But when the money spent by tourists is used to keep in being a Government which is a blot upon the face of nature, a

cheap holiday is too dearly purchased. Visitors are used for propaganda among the German people—we are not bothering about propaganda among our own. And men and women who think and feel should find it impossible to profess friendship to a Government, or to aid even to the extent of the profit gained from tourists. When the German Government is treated as it should be treated by decent-minded men and women, we shall be doing something to awaken the German people to the monstrous rule under which they are living. To maintain peaceful relations with Germany is one thing. But it is a far different thing to take in friendship hands blackened with the crimes that have stained those of the German rulers. One longs for another Gladstone who could at least rise above party manœuvring, and display something like human indignation at what is going on in central Europe.

According to the *New York Sun*, a group of twelve distinguished theologians are going to devote five years to revising the Bible, so as to give "an official version embodying the best results of modern scholarship." In the old days God inspired Holy Men to write "God's Word," and now, let us hope, he will treat gently the dozen eminent theologians who are presuming to go one better. A sample of the Mercy of God would be a dreadful thing to visit upon them.

A point new to some of us is explained in the *News Review* by an Irish Army Captain, in a letter headed "Nebuchadnezzar and Hitler." We were hoping the likeness might happily refer to "Nebu"'s incarceration in a lunatic asylum, in whose park the ancient anti-Semitic persecutor of God's chosen people acted as a human lawn-mower—using his teeth for a much better purpose than for biting and back-biting—his favourite amusement in the days of his alleged "sanity." No, we were wrong. Captain Smyth says that although Hitler may be a very bad man, he may at the same time be one of "God's Chosen Servants, used as instruments by Him in performing a service God has ordained." This may exculpate Hitler, but it is the nastiest thing ever said about God by one who worships Him. Also we are surprised at God! We suppose it is the old story of God "chastening those whom he loves"—His own chosen people. He might at least have used cleaner "instruments" of His wrath.

A queer topic is suggested by the Editor of the *British Weekly*, by his question: "Is Nature Aware?" He might leave that sort of idea to the poets. Tennyson never mentioned Nature's moods without dragging in irrelevant references to "Nature's music . . . a hollow echo of my own." But it won't do in cold prosaic journalism. W. S. Gilbert aptly satirized it in his *Bab Ballad*. *To The Terrestrial Globe*, telling it to "Roll on!" Nature is a convenient name by which to label the universe. Cosmic consciousness in the sense of attributing personality to a non-existent unity is an obvious absurdity. "Humanity"—the union of all living mankind is still a very far distant ideal but THAT may be worth aiming at. A union of apes, fish, hyenas and volcanoes is just unthinkable.

### Fifty Years Ago

THE Catholic Church has not been always the same, except in impudence. Saint Peter was not the first Pontiff, except in lying legends. The Church has launched new dogmas and repaired and altered old ones. Undoubtedly the Church is wide, but Buddhism is no less so. Certainly the Church is old, but Buddhism is older, and Brahmanism was hoary before Christianity was born. Mohammedanism itself, which founded its first empire on the ruins of Asiatic and African Catholicism—the Crescent defeating the Cross on a hundred battlefields—has lasted for more than twelve centuries. The Catholic Church only beats it by three or four hundred years. Does Cardinal Manning mean that a Church which has existed for twelve hundred years is human, and that a Church which has existed for sixteen hundred years is divine?

*The Freethinker*, November 4, 1888.

# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

FOR Circulating and Advertising the *Freethinker*.—Florence Adams, "In Memory of my Beloved Mother, Elizabeth Adams," £10; Mrs. Smith, £1; Mrs. M. Vanstone, 10s.

FREETHINKER Endowment Trust.—Emrys Williams, 10s.

ESQUIRER.—Copies of the Authorized Version of the Bible inform us by marginal notes of the supposed dates of the events recorded. The creation took place 4004 B.C. This computation was attributed to Archbishop Usher, but more ingenious divines gave us also the month, the day of the week, and the hour of the day of that year.

I. CARTER.—Thanks for your propagandist efforts. The paper will be sent to the address given.

H. DACKEN.—There is little help to be expected for Free-thought from political candidates whatever their party colours may be. The only way to affect these gentlemen—and ladies—is to make more and more Freethinkers. That is, and should be, our chief work. And it is the way in which our work always has been done.

A. VEASEY.—We fully appreciate your indignation at the treatment of the Jews in many parts of Europe. But why say it is done by "so-called Christians," or "self-styled Christians?" After all, persecution of Jews, and others, is a very old Christian pastime, and as, according to the New Testament, Jesus Christ sentenced unbelievers to hell, the practice has, for a Christian, very high authority.

D. DE ASTUY.—Thanks for cutting. Everyone who kept in touch knows quite well that the stories about the suppression of religious worship in Republican Spain are a pure Roman Catholic and Republican lie. But our Government never seemed to have any "official" information in these matters.

C. DAVY (Auckland N.Z.).—We are obliged for good wishes. Our being "laid aside" was, as you will have seen, only for a while, even then we never had quite to cease work. You are right. The Catholic leaders in all countries proved, in their denunciation of the "Godless Conference," that whatever they had lost they still retain their native power of lying and misrepresentation. And even after a very complete exposure, not one of them has the ordinary decency to express regret for his conduct. In that we are not surprised. Your good wishes have been handed on to all concerned.

H. B. BLEWETT.—Sorry we acknowledged your subscription last week under the name of "Bennett." You have our apologies.

Mr. J. HUMPHREY writes from Glasgow that he has been trying to get the *Freethinker* in the Woodside Library, hitherto without success. He informs us that there are eight religious papers and twelve Irish ones in this Library. The Librarian told Mr. Humphrey that if he wanted the *Freethinker* in the Library he would have to fight for it. Mr. Humphrey replied, "I like fighting." We hope others will join in.

Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

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.

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## Sugar Plums

To-day (November 6) Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Conway, Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, on "The New Science and the New God." This is a morning, not an evening meeting, and the lecture will commence at 11 o'clock. Admission is free.

A French historian and Freethinker has asked our assistance with a view to getting into touch with an English writer who is either a Freemason or acquainted with matters masonic. Our correspondent is writing a book (in French) on French Freemasons who, during the last century, were either deported or proscribed by certain reactionary French Governments. Certain of these came to England (which in the Nineteenth Century had a welcome for refugees from the Left) and they founded here a few masonic lodges. It should perhaps be explained here that French Freemasonry is Republican and anti-clerical, not, as in England, Church and State Tories almost to a man. It appears that Charles Bradlaugh was the founder of one of these lodges, *Les Philadelphes*, which included in its membership such eminent historical personages as Mazzini, Garibaldi, and Louis Blanc. Can any of our readers throw light on this subject? If so, they might communicate direct (in French, if possible) with M. Jean Bossu, Château de Jainvillotte, par Neufchâteau (Vosges), France. M. Bossu, though a student of masonry, is not a Freemason.

Mr. H. Cutner is visiting Leicester to-day (Sunday, November 6). He will address the Leicester Secular Society, his subject being, "A Century of Progress—or Decline." We hope he will have a good audience, and we are sure there will be plenty of matter for strong discussion.

The West Ham Branch is holding a Social on Saturday, November 12th, at the Earlham Hall, Earlham Grove, Forest Gate, commencing at 7 o'clock. There will be a full programme of dancing, singing and games. There is no charge for admission and a cordial invitation is extended to Freethinkers and friends to attend and assist in making the gathering a success.

## Czecho Freethinkers' Relief Fund

We are not satisfied with the subscriptions that have come to hand for this Fund, but as we go to press on Tuesday, the time has been short, and we know that many of our friends have already subscribed to the other funds that are in existence. But the need is urgent, and all known Freethinkers are marked in the German territory, and nothing faces them but death, or what is worse, continued ill-treatment at the hands of Hitler and his gangsters. Those who have escaped are absolutely destitute. We cannot say more at the moment, but every care is taken to see that the money is in safe hands for distribution. We hope next week to be able to report a very substantial amount to the credit of this fund.

Chapman Cohen, £1 1s.; R. H. Rosetti, £1 1s.; A. H. Devereux, £1; F. A. Marshall, 5s.; J. H. Minnit, £5; Mr. & Mrs. Ainsley, 5s.; V. Ray, 15s.; Miss M. Ray, 5s.; R. Spiers, £1 1s.; W. McKelvie, £1; A. W., 10s. 6d.; M. Duxbury, £2 2s.; H.R.C., 10s.; T. Bayard Simmons, £1 1s.; F. Skidmore, 5s.; T. Dixon, £2 2s.; T.W., 2s. 6d.; A. H. Millward, 10s. 6d.; A.T., M.E.M., Q.T., 2s. 6d.; Mrs. Helena Normanton, £1 1s.; W. W. Kensit, £5; Mr. and Mrs. C. Quinton, £1; Mrs. M. Vanstone, 10s.; J. Brodie, 2s. 6d.; Mr. L. M. Bury, 5s.; H. Bury, 5s.; J. J. Bury, 5s.; J. C. Kirkman, £1 1s.; Collected at Meeting of Leicester Secular Society, 12s.; H. Silvester, 10s.; Mrs. A. Shiel, 10s. Total: £30 0s. 6d.

We shall be obliged, if there is any inaccuracy in the above list, or if any subscription is not acknowledged, if those concerned will write at once.

## The Philosophy of Bergson

In his *Recent Philosophy* (1936), Prof. Laird has suggested Bergson's as the most widely read philosophy of the present day.

If this is so it may indicate a desire to find an antidote to the overwhelmingly materialist trend of modern science (Indeed could science progress in any other direction?).

Bergson's philosophy may be studied chiefly in *Time and Free Will* (1889), *Matter and Memory* (1896), *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1903) and *Creative Evolution* (1907) though his ideas are introduced into lesser works like *Dreams*.

One may speculate as to how far early tutoring may influence the choice of a philosophy, for Bergson was a pupil of M. Boutroux (d. 1921), who taught indeterminism before Eddington was thought of, and who appears to have had a determining influence on his other pupils, such as Delbos (d. 1916), Brunschvicg (*Introduction to the Life of Mind*), Blondel (*Thinking*, 1934), and the Bergsonian mystic, Le Roy.

One of his translators, the late Prof. H. Wildon Carr, has appropriately termed Bergson's philosophy the "philosophy of change."<sup>1</sup>

Reality, so Bergson contended, cannot be appreciated by the intellect, which can only deal with what is fixed, and so solidifies all it touches, making symbols of moving objects and congealing into concepts what is really a flowing reality. The analytical intellect remains inadequate for the discontinuous, which is merely an abstraction from continuous reality, all analysis being a translation into symbols, a substitution of stability for movement, necessary for common sense and practical affairs. The intellect is therefore a purely practical faculty developed in the struggle for existence and not a source of true beliefs. Reason is a mental organ evolved by adaptation.<sup>1</sup> Bertrand Russell<sup>2</sup> at this point objects that we only know of the struggle through intellect, and as the latter, on Bergson's theory, is not a source of truth, then nothing can be based on its findings. This brings a logical refutation to bear on Bergson's whole philosophy.

For Bergson reality is a continuous flow, or urge. Cinematographic science has to eliminate duration from time and mobility from motion before it can grasp and deal with them. Philosophy, however, starts from the direct intuition of reality, whereas the whole character of science is deterministic, in the discovery of law. Mechanism throws light on the parts, but not on their correlation. "The forceps of the mind are crude, and they crush the delicacy of reality when we attempt to hold it."<sup>3</sup> Spencer's evolution is thus merely a reconstruction of the fragmentary.

Duration and succession belong, not to the external world, but to the conscious mind. To know what happens we ought to see between intervals, but the mathematician sees only their extremities. He simply dots a curve and then interpolates. Similarly, concepts cut up life into unreal bits. Abandoning intellectual knowledge for the purposes of philosophy, we require that which will place us inside the movement. Intuition is our instrument.<sup>3</sup> We become aware of the change which is reality through intuition, which appreciates the flux or duration, which the intellect merely dissects, giving static moments such as cannot exist. Intuition proceeds from a faculty quite apart from the analytical. It is in fact the simple act which started the analysis, behind which it is concealed. It is an intensity, not a magnitude. Motion, from the

standpoint of the mover, is a simple and indivisible act. We invert reality when we regard rest as anterior to movement. From intuition we can pass to analysis, but not vice versa, for pure analysis leaves us suspended in the void.

Intuition is an extension of sense perception to the invisible and intangible, e.g., change, time, and, as a rare accomplishment, the *élan vital*. To reach intuition we must transcend concepts and dispense with symbols. What, then, does intuition reveal? The mind has the power of taking hold, by direct apprehension, of reality in itself, and before it undergoes the shaping and moulding and forming and framing imposed on it by the intellect in order to make it serve practical ends. We seize from within the mobile reality: it is our own personality in its flowing through time, our self which endures. Intuition is self analysis; we apprehend the moving life of the enduring self. "A moving continuity is given to us in which everything changes and yet remains."<sup>4</sup> Reality is movement, not something which moves; it is a tendency, an incipient change of direction. "Real movement is rather the transference of a state than of a thing (a quality rather than a quantity, and so akin to consciousness.)" (*Ib.*) Scientific materialism misses the real self, which lives in the flow of time, and the distinction between mind and matter should be made in terms of time and not of space. Real time can only be known by intuition in the direct perception of the passage of our inner states, which carry their past with them. They live in time flowing, not in the time flown. Each psychological state reflects the whole of a personality, containing virtually the whole, from which it can only be separated by abstraction in analysis, which does not imply dismemberment. Taken in itself the individual state is a perpetual becoming, from which we abstract a certain average quality which we suppose invariable.

Memory is the essence of spirit, for without the survival of the past into the present there could be no duration but only a succession of instantaneities. Memory "is something other than a function of the brain, and there is not merely a difference of degree but of kind between perception and recollection." (*Ib.*) "Perception is never a mere contact of the mind with the object present; it is impregnated with memory images which complete it as they interpret it." (*Ib.*) "Within myself a process of organization or interpenetration of conscious status in going on, which constitutes true duration. It is because I endure in this way that I picture to myself what I will call the past oscillations of the pendulum at the same time as I perceive the present oscillations."<sup>5</sup> Brain injuries cannot destroy memories but only prevent their actualization; here the body limits the action of the spirit.

Memory facilitates free will. "Spirit borrows from matter the perceptions on which it feeds, and restores them to matter in the form of movements which it has stamped with its own freedom." (*Ib.*) Bergson's example of free will, a creative action, is the framing of hypotheses in science. This activity, however, surely follows the perception of new systematic relationships on the objective side, and a resulting train of events in the scientist's brain.

In Bergson's scheme mind is non-spacial and non-temporal, and so cannot have come from what is. Knowledge of what is outside the brain cannot be manufactured by a process inside. Consciousness or mind, which comes into being at a precise point in the physiological process, cannot have been produced by a brain, which, he asserts rather cryptically, would then have to produce the external world. The mental

<sup>1</sup> Carr, *The Philosophy of Change*.

<sup>2</sup> *Mysticism and Logic*.

<sup>3</sup> *Creative Evolution*.

<sup>4</sup> *Matter and Memory*.

<sup>5</sup> *Time and Free Will*.

overlaps the cerebral, and while "consciousness in man is unquestionably connected with the brain, it by no means follows that a brain is indispensable to consciousness."<sup>6</sup> On the contrary, "consciousness or supra-consciousness is the name for the rocket whose extinguished fragments fall back as matter."<sup>7</sup> It struggles through vegetable and animal life, and has to abandon useless baggage and manifest only where there is a field for its creativity, not found in automatic life or in seeds.

The universe is a continual flow, evolution its movement. Life accumulates like a snowball, working on the inorganic obstructive matter (which goes on beyond our perception, this constituting his rejection of idealism), and making its own adjustments thereto, with adaptation implying, in the Lamarckian sense, a psychological principle of development. Reality is consciousness freeing itself from matter. Why, he asks, should life continue to complicate itself when it was adapted to its environment æons ago? His answer is the *élan vital*, a vital impulse operating on matter, the opposition through which it evolves, a hindrance, an obstacle, and then a waste flow back, an opposition through which consciousness makes a toilsome effort to break. This vital principle is sometimes diverted or divided by matter, but always opposed by it. Though life is becoming, essentially free, some action may be automatic where matter is not yet overcome. Life is like a current passing from germ to germ, the medium being an organism. The universe as a whole, nevertheless, has no unity of plan or purpose, not being subject to intelligent reason. Life is simply a free activity in an open universe.

Bergson rejects finalism or any transcendent teleology, and also rejects Leibnitz's Pre-established Harmony, which renders time useless. He agrees with F. H. Bradley that the God of theology is nothing since he *does* nothing, and he usually insisted that the *élan* was not to be considered personal or eternal. It has been said<sup>8</sup> that he was too pessimistic to be religious. A. S. Pringle-Pattison, however, reports<sup>9</sup> that in a letter Bergson wrote that his work should leave "a clear idea of a free and creative God, producing matter and life at once, whose creative effort is continued in a vital direction by the evolution of species and the construction of human personalities." On the other hand Inge<sup>10</sup> condemns Bergson's philosophy as "a stream of forces flowing in no definite direction, a shoreless river deriving the strength for its renewal from some blind and unintelligent impulse."

With regard to personal survival under his system, Bergson maintained it to be certainly impossible that the soul of an individual could exist as that individual apart from the body, because it was just that embodiment which constituted the individuality. Philosophy, he said, revealed no ground for belief in survival, the only hope lying in the soul's character as duration, which may win for it a certain vague continuity.

Bergson is aptly described by Julian Huxley as a good poet but a bad scientist, "for to say that biological progress is explained by the *élan vital* is to say that the movement of a train is explained by an *élan locomotif* of the engine."<sup>11</sup> "The vital principle," Bergson admits, "may indeed not explain much, but it is at least a sort of label affixed to our ignorance so as to remind us of this occasionally, while mechanism invites us to ignore that ignorance."<sup>12</sup> Actually the reverse is the case. The *élan* encourages us to forget our ignorance under a stop gap, an irrelevant term,

while mechanism focusses our attention on it as removable by scientific investigation, which has met with such success in previous difficulties, to the discrediting of similar vitalist theories.

Had Bergson had access to later works like Haldane's *Causes of Evolution* or Morgan's *Scientific Basis of Evolution* there is surely much he would have left unsaid. Morgan severely criticizes Bergson's postulate that to respond adaptively is the essence of life, which makes adaptation an inherent property of living matter, "as though evolution belonged to metaphysics or theology instead of to science."

Others, like Joad, Russell, and Viscount Haldane have adversely criticized Bergson's depreciation of the intellect. "But for intelligence," says the latter, "his intuition would surely have been more unconsciously directed instinct and have remained so. It is intelligence that has enabled him to transcend the point of view of intelligence itself as he conceives it."<sup>13</sup> "Under the name of intuition," writes Russell, Bergson "has raised instinct to the position of sole arbiter of metaphysical truth."<sup>14</sup> and he objects that the intellect does exactly that which Bergson denies to it, that is, it appreciates duration and movement. Many of our thoughts are prolonged thinkings, and there is also the function of verbs. It would be entertaining, moreover, to invert Bergson and claim "reality" to be a series of disconnected events, with mobility an addition by the mind.

Bergson made one statement which in the light of physical research concedes his entire system. "There is one, and only one, method of refuting materialism," he declares. "It is to show that matter is precisely that which it appears to be, i.e., dead. Thereby we eliminate all virtuality, all hidden power, and establish the phenomena of spirit as an independent reality."<sup>15</sup>

That is to say, that in view of the established electric constitution of matter, "the only method of refuting materialism" has failed.

G. H. TAYLOR.

<sup>13</sup> *Reign of Relativity.*

<sup>14</sup> *Mysticism and Logic.*

<sup>15</sup> *Matter and Memory.*

## The Temple Bells are Calling

[This article is based on an actual police-court case reported in the popular press.]

STEPHEN SOULFUL is a religious man. Church Bells ringing on a Sunday morning rouse emotions in his bosom. He then feels impelled to tell his Maker what a lot he thinks of Him. Stephen's soul clamours for sustenance. It will be appropriate, he feels, before attending to his bodily comforts on Monday, to straighten up his soul on Sunday. He thinks that a little of what he fancies will do him good. So he jumps into the car and hurries along to St. Xavier's intent on partaking of the Blood and the Body. Faster, faster! It is bad form to be late for church.

List the tintinnabulation of the bells! What Philistine would dare to say that this gorgeous noise does not satisfy something deep down in the nature of man? Come, come, come to the House of God! Turn away, turn away from worldly cares! Come and wash, come and wash, come and wash! In the Blood, Blood, Blood, of the Lamb, Lamb, Lamb!

One bell, now. Five more minutes and the service will begin. Hurry, Hurry, Hurry! One must not be late for Divine Worship. God notices these things and insists upon his rations of proper respect.

Hurry, then! Oh, what was that? The wheel has gone over something soft. (A piercing howl.) It

<sup>6</sup> *Matter and Memory.*

<sup>7</sup> *Creative Evolution.*

<sup>8</sup> *Religion and Science* (Mellor).

<sup>9</sup> *The Idea of God.*

<sup>10</sup> *Science, Religion and Reality* (sym.).

<sup>11</sup> *Essays of a Biologist.*

<sup>12</sup> *Creative Evolution.*

must have been a dog. It is still howling. It isn't dead, anyway. And the temple bells are ringing, beckoning the believers, the faithful, the devout, the soulful to worship the giver of all life. Stephen Soulful is a religious man; he would worship, and that right rapidly. His need is urgent. That was a nasty noise that dog made. *Anyway it isn't dead.* He would make a discreet enquiry on his road back from church after he had partaken of the sacrament and his primary religious duties had been attended to. Put First Things First! The Temple Bells are still ringing. It's a pity that dog is still howling. Damn—*Hang the dog! Anyway, it isn't dead.* Ah, here we are. Good morning, Mr. Wood. It has been a dreadful week, hasn't it? Yes, I've heard about old Parkinson. Well, of course, one should always be charitable, but I am afraid it's too true. My wife tells me—but I'll see you after the service.

Oh, you were in a hurry for Church, said the Magistrate. The Church Bells were ringing! Indeed! But there are, I am afraid, other sounds than Church Bells that should be listened to. Forty Shillings and costs! Stand down, Mr. Soulful. NEXT.

Just a dog, murmurs Mr. Soulful. What is the magistrate making a song about? At any rate I was going to make a few inquiries on my way home. Doth God care for oxen? Godlessness is pervading even the Bench of Magistrates. Oh for a proper piety, the feeling deep within one that the things of God must come first—at any rate, on Sundays. Faith is being displaced by gross materialism. I must write to my M.P. about it, and send another half-crown to the Fund to crush Godlessness. What are we coming to? Has a dog a soul? If so, has a beetle a soul? Has a green-fly a soul? Really this sentimentalism makes me sick. When I was a boy, people were more robust and more truly religious. They worshipped God in my young days, not animals. This'll cost me about Four Pounds altogether, I should say. I wonder who that magistrate is, anyhow. I'll make a few enquiries. I shouldn't wonder if he's a Red. Fancy a man like that administering Law and Order. What are we coming to?

Only a dog! All this fuss about a miserable object that cannot take the sacrament. *Four Pounds!*

Yes, poor old dog, you are capable of suffering, but you are not worth damning. The ringing of the temple bells has no meaning to you, you poor dull clod. You are soulless, you do not base your life upon the Sermon on the Mount as the soulful do. You would turn up your nose at the Blood and the Body as miserable fare for a healthy puppy. Every snivelling lout that leans against the lamp-post, half-drunk, has the grace, because of the priceless possession of a soul, to pull himself together and salute the religious procession. Hear the soulful one in the smoke-room! Now, gentlemen. As smutty as you like, but no blasphemy please. Don't you see in this, Rover, man has you beaten to a frazzle?

No matter, old dog! Whilst the inhumanity of the soulful has made countless thousands mourn, you, at any rate, have been faithful and dependable. You have been truly grateful for your bite and sup. You have been loving and affectionate—and understanding. You have done tolerably well without a soul, old man, and, if what befalls a dog befalls a man, I am content. The temple bells may call me, but they must call you at the same time for me to take heed. Now, what about a walk, old man? Come along, you soulless lump, and less noise!

T. H. ELSTON.

## A Lament for the British House of Commons

GOD knows what is happening to the British House of Commons. It is becoming positively Atheistic.

We have been solemnly assured by the highest authorities in the land, from "Peacemaker" Chamberlain and the Archbishop of Canterbury down to the penniest-ha'penniess Sunday-evening Christian, that the last-minute Czechoslovak "settlement" which averted world war was the "hand of God," the Almighty's answer to the prayers of the multitudes—yet the House of Commons has been discussing (and even criticizing) that divine settlement as though it had nothing to do with God at all.

Away from Westminster many of our statesmen and M.P.'s have been flocking to churches with pious mothers and scared pantry-maids to give thanks to God and to assure their constituents that the settlement was God's greatest bit of business since the creation (with the little "divine blessing" of the 1914-1918 affair conveniently forgotten). Yet inside the House of Commons they have had the effrontery to talk of the matter as if it were simply just a question of armies and navies and alliances, and men and munitions and butchery. God was not even mentioned—except in rhetoric. The Archbishop—whom our Constitution officially recognizes as being the chief confidant and aide-de-camp of the Almighty—was not even called in by these ignorant brutish Commons to advise them on what God intended now that he had averted (or postponed) the war.

There was no suggestion that in this new era of peace, friendship and goodwill, we should rely alone on God's strengthening hand and the love of our fellow beings; on the contrary, the most definite contribution by Mr. Chamberlain—who had been working the "God and prayer" stunt for all he was worth—was that, whatever happened, we must not cease for a moment with our rearmament programme, but must repair the gaps and make our armed strength really efficient.

"More guns—for the love of God, more guns," is a curious kind of laurel wreath motto to welcome the new era of brotherhood inaugurated by God, Hitler, and Mr. Chamberlain. The renewed advent of God into international affairs is apparently the renewed advent of the gospel of the Chicago gangster—where friends must remain well armed, or they will not long remain friends.

And all this has happened, not in Soviet Russia, where everything is known to be by the divine will of the Atheistic Stalin, but actually in "Christian England," where the King is still a sacred god in miniature, and an archbishopric is still worth £15,000 a year. It is surely the peak of irony that just when he has decided to answer Britain's prayers (with the others) and save Britain, at least for the time being, from a war for which she might not have been too well prepared, God should have the bitter fact thrust upon him that he is rejected by those who think, and ignored by those who go in for politics.

Mr. Winston Churchill certainly did not appear to think the Munich settlement showed the hand of God. At least, he implied that if it did, he didn't think much of that kind of God, and thought we would do a lot better without God—provided we had a really good air force.

Even the pious Mr. Chamberlain and his supporters did not mention God's good work once in their official motion, "That this House approves the policy of His Majesty's Government, by which war was averted in the recent crisis, and supports their efforts for a lasting peace." Why, this gave all the credit to the

Government, and cut God out altogether, although Mr. Chamberlain and God had presumably been working side by side in the business.

Nor did the pious Labour Party do any better with its amendment. Not only did this not restore God to his rightful place in the scheme of things, but it actually dared to disapprove of God's work. It "could not approve a policy which had led to the sacrifice of Czechoslovakia under threat of armed force, and to the humiliation of our country and its exposure to grave dangers." Can you beat that for blasphemous ingratitude? Why, if this kind of thing goes on, God might refuse to work up another "crisis" so that he can answer our prayers and avert war.

The crisis has shown once again, of course, that in times of mass hysteria and mass fear, the people will flock in their millions back to superstition, and that the Churches will be right on the spot with a commodity to meet the demand. In days of panic even one's worldly and apparently intelligent neighbours suddenly and urgently re-discover their touching "faith" in the tribal deities. But once the panic is over and the doves begin to settle down, God is soon forgotten again; and the same people—although never honest enough to admit it in words—show by their everyday actions and conversation that they fully realize God had nothing whatever to do with it.

The British citizen who suggested to-day—on the threshold of the new era of Anglo-Germano-Italian love, brotherhood and understanding—that we must trust solely in God and stop all our air raid precautions, would be rushed to a mental ward without waiting for certification. And the Foreign Secretary who announced that we must prove our trust in God by reducing the British Navy by half would meet an even stranger fate than befell Mr. Anthony Eden.

Even the intimate friends of Almighty God are rather divided on the question of how far they can trust him. The Roman Catholic and Protestant leaders have all assured us that the settlement was the hand of God, but even they, in some cases, seem not too well satisfied with the divine details. Hitler and his religious leaders are also confident that it was the hand of God—which is not surprising, seeing what they got out of it. But to say "Thank God!" from sheer greed, or "Thank God!" from sheer fright, is not quite the same as being able to thank the God of All Justice, Love and Mercy for the just, loving and merciful settlement that was in his power.

For instance, what do the Czechs' spiritual leaders think? Presumably they are as much (or as little) in touch with God as our own spiritual leaders who claim to speak in God's name? Well, although the Pope of all the Roman Catholics (including those in Czechoslovakia) acclaimed the settlement as a "miracle" from God, his subordinate brother-in-God, the Roman Catholic Primate of Bohemia (viewing the matter from the rather differing point of view of the sacrificed Czechs) doesn't by any means agree on its divine origin, and stresses its earthly Anglo-French connexions. "The land of St. Wenceslaus has been invaded by foreign armies and the thousand-year-old frontier has been violated. This sacrifice has been imposed on the nation of St. Wenceslaus by one ally and one friend," he announced. "The Primate of the ancient kingdom of Bohemia is praying to God Almighty that the peace efforts prompting this terrible sacrifice will be crowned by permanent success; and should they not, he is praying the Almighty to forgive all those who imposed this injustice on the people of Czechoslovakia."

It would almost appear that the Holy Primate is as big a sceptic as Mr. Winston Churchill. But he is more cautious, more Christian, than that; he calls traditional Christian cunning to his aid. If things do turn out all right in the end, then it is the hand of

God. But if things turn out all wrong instead, then it certainly isn't the hand of God, and Mr. Chamberlain, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Pope, and all the others are wrong in saying that God had anything to do with it. So the Primate faithfully safeguards the interests of the Almighty both ways. Such a commendably cautious attitude might be recommended to Mr. Chamberlain and the Archbishop, rather than rushing in bald-headed for God and St. George. The Primate's method allows just as much scope for the most primitive superstitions, it permits just as much wild emotionalism, it kids the people just the same—and it has the advantage of leaving a get-out for God and the bishops.

R. H. S. STANDFAST.

## Materialism

*Materialism Re-stated.* By Chapman Cohen.  
(Pioneer Press, 3s. 6d.)

SINCE philosophers first broke with the mystic conception of the universe, there has been no more ardent advocate of materialism than Secular Society leader Chapman Cohen.

This volume is an enlarged and revised edition of the one published under the same title in 1927. In it Mr. Cohen reiterates, re-emphasizes, with wonted clarity and vigour, the scientific world outlook he has expounded now for well nigh fifty years.

... It is one of the merits of this book that it sweeps away all these and similar misconceptions. Then the author states the historical significance and scientific meaning of Materialism concisely and clearly, leaves no room at all for misunderstanding.

Opposing schools naturally come in for a great deal of attention. New or old, they are subjected to the same rigorous inspection. With the more recent discoveries in many fields of science Chapman Cohen has no quarrel. What he decries is the contention that they have altered in any way the bases of world reality.

"The essential feature of the concept of materialism is as active to-day as ever it was," he concludes. "It lies at the basis of all genuine science. Changes in our conception of the nature of 'matter' have nothing at all to do with it."

Whatever the reader's prejudices on the subject, so long as they do not blind him altogether, he is certain to derive entertainment as well as instruction from the verbal rapier play of one of Britain's ablest controversialists.

Reprinted from "Cavalcade," October 29, 1938.

## Correspondence

### IS THERE A JEWISH RACE?

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—In October 23 issue of the Freethinker ("Acid Drops"), there is a statement which says there is no such thing as a Jewish race. I was really greatly surprised at reading this, being, in my humble way, under the impression they were a race similar to English, German, etc. If they only get the name through being believers in Judaism, why is it one can generally tell a Jew or Jewess by their features, whereas one could not easily pick out a Catholic, Protestant or any other Christian. If you would explain this through the medium of the *Freethinker* I should be grateful.

W. CROSSLEY ALLEN.

["Race" can only have a biological implication, and in that sense there exists no nation or collection of peoples who can respond to that test. The English and the Germans are no more a definite "race" than are the inhabitants of the United States. There are cultural differences that arise as the result of different forms of institutional life, and it is these that, with the uninformed, are ticketed as "racial."]

But there is no relation between the biological nature of a people and the institutional and social life under the influence of which they live. If it were otherwise, the English Royal Family would have still to be counted as German, and many Germans would have to be classed as something else. When Mr. Crossley says he is able to pick out those who are Jews, we should much like to know what he does with the multitude of Jews who do not look like Jews, of Italians who do not look like Italians, and Germans who are anything but German-looking? It is a case of counting the hits and forgetting the misses.—EDITOR, *Freethinker*.]

### THE THREE IMPOSTORS

Sir,—Philomneste Junior, in his Introduction to the *De Tribus Impostoribus* reprinted by him in 1861 from the Vallière Edition, mentions a French work entitled *Traité des Impostoribus*. This, he says, is substantially the same as a work which circulated in manuscript at the beginning of the eighteenth century, under the title *Esprit de Spinoza*, and which was printed at the Hague in 1719.

After specifying various reprints thereof, he goes on to say that before him lies,

an English translation published at Dundee in 1844, J. Myles, in 12mo., and entitled, *The Three Impostors* (96 pages). . . . This translation was made from the French Edition published at Amsterdam in 1776, and it has been reprinted in 1846 at New York by G. Vale, 3 Franklin Square.

Obviously the work above referred to is not the one derived from the Vallière Collection and reprinted by Philomneste Junior. I hope these details will be of interest to Mr. Neuburg, whose kind reference to my article gave me much pleasure.

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

### THE HISTORICAL JESUS

SIR,—In reference to Mr. Cutner's most interesting article, based on an article by Loisy in the *Hibbert Journal* for last July, in which he takes up the question of the historicity of Jesus, may I again draw attention—as I did in the *Freethinker* in 1934—to the articles then appearing and written by the Editor in the *Hibbert Journal*, on Loisy's notable book *La Naissance du Christianisme*?

In that book, though the personality of a founder of Christianity is assumed, so we gather from Dr. Jack's review, as a starting point of the many myths which gathered round him—in accordance with the credulity of the times especially of Eastern civilization which persists, so I am told, down to the present day on a scale now foreign to the West—the spread of Christianity is accounted for by Loisy, not on historical, but on psychological grounds, which impress the modern reader as being far more convincing than and indeed almost independent of its starting point, whether historical or mythical.

MAUD SIMON.

P.S.—Personally I find such a chapter as Matthew 23 difficult to dissociate from some records of a Jewish prophet or reformer.

One cannot charge English ideas so much as, if I live, I hope to change them, without saying imperturbably what one thinks and making a good many people uncomfortable. The great thing is to speak without a particle of vice, malice, or rancour.—*Matthew Arnold*.

If you are in the habit of believing in special providences, or of expecting to continue your romantic adventures in a second life, materialism will dash your hopes most unpleasantly, and you may think for a year or two that you have nothing to live for. But a thorough materialist, one born to the faith and not half plunged into it by an unexpected christening in cold water, will be like the superb Democritus, a laughing philosopher.

*George Santayana.*

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

### LONDON

#### OUTDOOR

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Highbury Corner): 8.0, Friday, L. Ebury. White Stone Pond, 11.30, Sunday, L. Ebury. Parliament Hill Fields, 3.30, L. Ebury. South Hill Park, 8.0, Monday, L. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.30, Sunday, Mrs. N. Buxton, Miss Millard, Messrs. Bryant, Baines, Collins and Tuson.

#### INDOOR

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Alexandra Hotel, South Side, Clapham Common, S.W.4): 7.30, Debate—"The Historicity of Jesus Christ." *Affir.*: Mr. B. Fuller. *Neg.*: Mr. F. A. Ridley.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Chapman Cohen—"The New Science and the New God."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. ("The Laurie Arms," Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, Mrs. Janet Chance—"The Bourne Case—Is it enough?"

### COUNTRY

#### OUTDOOR

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Bigg Market): Friday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

#### INDOOR

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Bristol Street Schools): 7.0, Debate—"Militant Atheism v. Theoretical Materialism." Mr. H. W. Cottingham and Mr. T. G. Millington.

BRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane): 7.30, Rev. W. J. Carter (Unitarian, Birkenhead)—"Why I am a Theist."

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Jubilee Assembly Hall, Market Street, Blackburn): 7.30, Monday, Mr. J. V. Shortt (Liverpool)—"Fascism and Christianity."

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Laycock's Forum): 7.15, Mr. F. O. Wood—"Religion in Germany."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. J. Clayton "Word Magic."

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Free Gardeners' Hall, Picardy Place, Edinburgh): 7.0, Prof. V. G. Childe—"The Beginnings of Civilization."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Mr. R. Ernest Way, N.D.—"How Nature can Cure."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. H. Cutner—"A Century of Progress—or Decline?"

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Islington, Liverpool, entrance in Christian Street): 7.0, J. T. Brighton (Chester-le-Street)—"Education in Error."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (King's Café, 64-66 Oxford Road, Manchester, near All Saints Church): 7.0, Mr. R. P. Fisher (Manchester)—"The Modern Barbarism." A Collection: the proceeds of which will go to Czecho Freethinkers' Aid Fund.

NELSON BRANCH N.S.S. (Weavers' Institute, Nelson): 7.30, Mr. J. Clayton—"Evils of Religion."

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Green Street): 7.30, Mr. N. Charlton (Gateshead)—A Lecture.

TEES SIDE BRANCH N.S.S. (Jubilee Hall, Leeds Street, Stockton): 7.15, Mr. H. Dalkin—"What is Truth?"

TOTTERIDGE LANE, N.20.—Board Residence, Full board op'tl. Nice room overlooking garden. H. & C. in bedroom; terms very moderate; suit City man. Write TOTTERIDGE, c/o. *Freethinker*, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

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