

# THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED *by* CHAPMAN COHEN •

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

## Views and Opinions

### Me and God

SOME well-meaning Christian has been good enough to send me a tract with the heading "Prepare to meet thy God." But as a matter of fact I have always been prepared to meet two things, one is a god, the other is a genuine 100 per cent ghost. Ghosts, so far as I understand them, are very harmless things, very foolish, for even the ghost of a great writer seldom manifests a style that would secure him a place in a newspaper office, and the philosopher who again visits earth bears dreary evidence in his speech to the rapid decay of intelligence in the "summer land." For the rest all that ghosts ask of us humans is that, we shall be properly scared by them when they do appear, and show our appreciation of the fantastic taste they display in wandering round the same area where someone stabbed them in the back or gave them a dose of poison. But, alas, ghosts have always fought shy of my company, and although for years I have advertised my willingness to occupy a haunted, but comfortably built house, at a merely nominal rent, no one has yet taken me at my word.

As to "God." I am as willing to meet *my*, or any other person's, god as I am to meet a ghost. I cannot say that I have hunted for a god in the same way that I might look for a ghost. There are difficulties in the way of my doing that. Based on thousands of descriptions I know what a ghost is supposed to look like. It always resembles a human being, and it has the quality of appearing out of the air and disappearing into the air again. Anyone can see through an orthodox ghost. But it does remain a tangible object long enough for one to mistake it for a real thing, and, therefore, provided it doesn't talk sensibly or reason logically, I should recognize a ghost if I met one.

But with regard to a god! How should I know one if I met one? Indeed, I do not know whether god is a "he" or a "she," or just a mere "it." If I happened to run across a god in Fleet Street, I do not

see by what means I should know that I had done so. I do know when I meet a man or a cow because I can place the object seen in cow or man category. That is what is meant by "recognition." It is recognizing, to know again, to recall something. It is to compare a sight or a feeling with similar sights or feelings previously experienced. It is, of course, quite common for preachers and others to place their hands in the region of the stomach and to say they have a feeling within that God has spoken, or is speaking to them. But the gastric region is prolific in the production of feelings, and indigestion may easily be mistaken for inspiration. Tylor long ago suggested that had the refectory door been kept open there would not have been nearly so many visions of "God."

So I really do not know how I am to prepare to meet God, or how I can be sure that I have met him if fortune so favoured me. So many people have met God in an earthquake, or a wreck at sea, or in some other situation where the nerves are at a tension, or the imagination out of control, only to discover that they can get identical experiences without a god. For years I have been asking some one to point out to me the substantial difference between spiritual and spirituous visions, and have been met only with the complaint that I am frivolous, or blasphemous. But that is not true. It is actually a genuinely scientific approach to the subject. Science is concerned with the facts of a situation, and the visions that arise from the meditations of a half-starved monk may easily, to a genuine scientific enquirer, have fundamental relationship with those visions that are a consequence of alcoholic indulgence. And I really am in earnest when I say that in this question of finding God there are two things that puzzles me. How do I set about finding God, and how do I know it is a God when I have found him, or it? And there is a final question. What can I do with him when I have found him?

Again, in talking in this way I shall be accused of being frivolous or blasphemous. But why? If I am to devote myself to finding God, it is only reasonable to enquire by what marks I shall know a God when I meet one. Looking for something the appearance of which I haven't the slightest conception is worse than looking for a black cat in a black alley on a dark night. I should know the cat by feeling it, but what do I feel when I come across a God if I don't know beforehand what he, or it, feels like. I beg the Christian believer to approach this important question in a properly serious frame of mind. I have his assurance that to fall into the hands of God is a very serious matter. I beg him, therefore not to be frivolous.

\* \* \*

### Gods—and Gods

My would-be benefactor gives me no help in these difficulties. He proceeds to call me names. He says, in capital letters, as though he is calling the whole



world as witness, "The Fool hath said in his heart there is no God." Indeed I have said nothing of the kind. How could I make such a statement when I do not know what a God is. I can think of a cow which, through some curious development of its spinal column, has a tail spurting out of its side, but I cannot even think of a cow that lacks all the features and qualities that make a cow. At least I should not recognize it as a cow. A proposition must be at least thinkable to be made the subject of affirmation or denial. Recognition is as essential to affirmation as it is to denial. I must at least know what is meant when I am asked whether I deny or affirm. But when I am asked whether I believe in something or do I deny it, and I very humbly ask, "What is it like?" and in reply I am told that it is not like anything else, I feel hurt. It is not treating me fairly. A riddle that has no answer at all is just foolishness.

Of course, I know, as does everyone else, that there are such things as gods—thousands of them. I have a couple of small African gods within reach of my hand, and have often used another god for propping open a door—which is as useful a purpose to which one may put a god as any I have heard of. But when my tract-distributing friend hears of these gods, I feel sure he will deny the existence of everyone of them. He becomes an all-round, blaspheming Atheist. Like the "Fool" he quotes with so much approval he will say of all these gods, "there is no god" here. And at such profound, such uncompromising Atheism I feel inclined to stand up in their defence, and to say that these gods exist as much as any other god past and present. I do not confer upon them, or upon the Christian God, immortality, but they certainly exist. They exist as physical objects, and they exist, for a time, as psychological facts. I join with the Christian in saying that they do not exist as objective facts, but that does not mean they do not exist for such as believe in them. They are fashioned in the likeness of man, as all gods are fashioned, whether the pattern be a primitive savage or a modern philosophic bishop. Perhaps it would be nearer the truth to say that they embody caricatures of human qualities, for they are made up of human qualities at their lowest and ugliest, with an occasional accidental dash of human qualities at their best, which appear to have got there by accident. In relation to these gods the Christian and myself are bound together in bonds of an uncompromising Atheism. We can both be Atheists here, because Atheism must exist in relation to something understood. It cannot exist in relation to the incomprehensible and the inconceivable. Christian Atheism falls short of completeness because one god is reserved out of a multitude, and it calls this the "true" god. Which, by the way, is often enough the way the other fellow describes *his* God. In any case I do not see what a man means when he says that he believes in a God, but he is not like this or that or the other. He has no body, he has no parts, he has no passions. That seems about as recognizable, as tangible and as useful as a footless stocking minus a leg.

I recall that when I was a boy there came to the town in which I was born, a showman who displayed at the annual fair an invisible man. Not a man who became invisible before the eyes of those who were looking at him, but a 100 per cent invisible man, one who was invisible all the time. People paid their pennies to enter the show, and came out grinning, leaving it for others to pay their pennies. I have since learned to appreciate the sense of humour displayed. But the showman went to a neighbouring town where the sense of humour was not so well developed—and the crowd broke up the show because the invisible man could not be seen.

I wish my tract-distributing friend would describe to me the difference between this invisible man and his invisible, indefinable, unthinkable God in whom he believes, and to get nearer to whom he pays for his seat in church where the official expounds to him what the indefinable does, and how the unthinkable works. And also, how do I know when I am in touch with this invisible and unthinkable deity? It really seems to me that the original Mumbo-Jumbo is a more reasonable proposition.

\* \* \*

#### What can I do?

There are one or two other questions that suggest themselves. There seems to be a kind of catch-who-catch-can performance going on. We are told that God—the up-to-date unthinkable God—seeks man. We are also told that man seeks—"hungers" is the official word—for God. And I am invited to join in the game which seems to be that of one dodging the other. But why should I be eager to find God? I do not, so far as I can see, expose myself to any danger by not finding him. I have not worse health than the average man who has found him. I am not more repulsive in my appearance, less fortunate—on the whole—in my ventures. God does not appear to be annoyed with me for not finding him. If I want to know more, or to be better in health, or cure myself of any bad habits, I must pursue the same paths, whether I believe in God or not.

Why is this so? Is it that this inconceivable has a little kindly feeling for me because I do not insult him under pretence of paying compliments? If I do not thank him for my health, I do not blame him for any illness I may have. I do not blame him for the ills of the world by implying that he has the power to end them—if he will. I do not worry him with all sorts of petitions, or ask him to work miracles such as filling Members of Parliament with wisdom and justice. I neither blame him nor worry him, and it may be that in recognition of my forbearance he leaves me alone.

And yet I understand why God, according to his representatives, is anxious that I should worship him. Years ago Mr. H. G. Wells wrote a novel under the title of *The Food of the Gods*. The food consisted of a chemical preparation. But gods do not and never have fed upon so material a diet. Even when animals are sacrificed to them it is the "savour" they get, while the priests and people get the meat. When Noah "sacrificed" to God specimens "of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl," it was not the meat that God got, but "a sweet savour," and he was quite satisfied with his share. All the gods of whom I have read have lived upon the same kind of diet. The rain-gods, the fire-gods, etc., all lived upon the savour of man's worship and sacrifice. All the gods of whom we read, Jove, Osiris, Bacchus, with myriads of others, all have lived upon the worship of their followers, and would still be with us had they not been starved out of existence. The famous ambrosia which the gods of high Olympus revelled in must have been another name for worship. We are warned that we cannot take the kingdom of heaven by storm, but it is very, very evident that we can starve God out of existence. It is also evident that while man can live without gods, gods cannot live without man and the worship which man gives. The real food of the gods is the adulation, the flattery, the worship, that man gives them. The constant cry of the gods is "Give us worship or we perish." They are evidently more dependent upon man than man is upon gods.

CHAPMAN COHEN

Over the desert of death the sphinx gazes for ever, but does not speak.—Ingersoll.



## Protestant v. Catholic in the Baltic States

I HAVE never been able, like certain friends and colleagues in the Freethought movement, to regard it as a matter of indifference from the Freethought standpoint whether a man is a Protestant or a Roman Catholic. Such friends have taken the attitude that the man was a Christian, and, therefore, an idiot, and that all the Freethinker had to do was to abolish the Christian, without any nice discrimination as to what shade of Christian belief he held. I have always thought this a *simplist* attitude, and for that reason a mistaken one. It is a matter of great moment to Freethinkers, I contend, that the Christian enemy should be as much divided as possible: when rogues fall out honest men come by their own! Besides which I think that if an analysis could be made of the Christian background from which Freethinkers come, it would be found that in three cases out of four, that background was Protestant. (I am not now dealing, of course, with Jews and other non-Christian religionists.) The Protestant, being in revolt again the older, larger and more influential section of Christianity, has to fight against the effort of the larger section to suppress him. To do this he claims individual freedom against ecclesiastical discipline. So does the Freethinker. He, the Protestant, insists on inward conviction in the place of unquestioning obedience. In other words, he makes Conscience his guide; not the canons and dogmas of the Church. The Freethinker also rejects Christian dogmas for the way of life directed by his own private reasoning. The Protestant's crowning offence in the eyes of the older forms of Christianity is that he claims the right of immediate access to his god without the intervention of a professional priesthood. The struggle of this priesthood to suppress the heretic who is undermining their livelihood is understandable, and when the Protestant defends himself he must willy-nilly defend also the right of private judgment of others in the matter of religion. This covers the non-religious Freethinker. If, therefore, this argument is sound, then, in the present relatively weak state of Freethought throughout the world, the ebb and flow of the struggle of the Protestant versus the Catholic Christian is of vital interest to Freethinkers. I confess I shrink from drawing the logical conclusion of my own argument, namely, that Freethinkers should actively support the Protestant Churches against Rome. But I am bound to say that in my judgment the advance of Roman Catholicism in my own country during the last fifty years is the direct result of the weakening of Protestantism. That weakening is doubtless due in part to many Protestants leaving their churches and chapels for the ranks of Freethought, but be that as it may, the growth of Catholicism in England is so obvious and so menacing that, *faute de mieux*, I read with gladness, tempered with regret, of the progress of Protestantism in other European countries. The regret, of course, is due to many ugly things bound up with Protestantism. But the gladness is for any attempt from any quarter to smash the attack from Rome on the right of private judgment and expression on all matters concerning the mental, moral, and, if you like, spiritual welfare of man.

These reflections have been prompted by reading of a new Protestant movement in Scandinavia and the Baltic countries against the Catholic Church. For this information I am indebted to the French Freethought journal *L'Idée Libre*, the excellent monthly edited by M. Lorulot, the leader of the French Freethought movement. This new movement has its

dangers—it is, for example, racist—but any movement which strengthens the stand of northern Europe against the oncoming of Mediterranean night—now so greatly reinforced by the collapse in Spain—must be, I submit, a source of satisfaction to those who realize that men must work with the tools they have at hand. In the belief, therefore, that readers of the *Freethinker* would like to know something of this new movement, with its hopes and dangers, I shall quote freely from the article in question: *The "Pirma's Gamma's against the Catholic Church."* (Don't ask me what *Pirma's Gamma's* means: I don't know!)

The article begins by saying that already people are beginning to talk of a movement of Young Balts, said to be secret so far, but which promises to take in the near future an original and important place. This movement is called the *Pirma's Gamma's*, and is described as being racial-socialist and anti-Catholic. It has as its principal aim the awakening of all the Baltic and Scandinavian ethnic groups throughout the entire world. It warns them not to fall into the net of the Catholic Church, which Church is said to be more than ever penetrating into Protestant countries and making many converts there.

On the face of it this movement (if it is a true movement and not a coterie) resembles the National-Socialist movement of Germany, which also is racist and to a considerable extent anti-Catholic. Perhaps if this Baltic Movement grows it may also throw up a Pagan branch. The article dwells on the old cult of sun and nature worship of the Norsemen or Vikings, which in the eleventh and twelfth centuries went down before "Western Civilization" brought to the Baltic lands by the Catholic priests. This sort of sentimentalism with its nostalgia for the old Pagan gods is reminiscent of Alfred Rosenberg, Hitler's pet philosopher. Rosenberg, by the bye, is a Balt, being born at Reval (now Tallinn) in Estonia.

The heroes of this movement are naturally the Baltic and Scandinavian princes who struggled against the Roman Church but it is with the present form of this struggle that the reader is likely to be interested. The leader of the *Pirma's Gamma's* is one Saulstars von Krüdener, the nationality of whom is not stated, but the name is German. It is claimed by this gentleman that though the Baltic States have become politically free, the statesmen of these countries are always trying to deliver their spiritual life to Rome and the Pope. Protestant churches are being turned over to the Catholic Church; the Papal Nuncio presides over the Diplomatic Corps; Protestant writers are praising the Pope; and a Minister of Foreign Affairs, who is a Papal Count, has let loose a second Papal invasion of these countries. But there is a Nordic revolt against this Latin (read Catholic) and Oriental (read Semitic) invasion. A good deal of Mr. Krüdener's invective is of a wild and whirling nature, but he makes a good point when he says that the Roman Catholics are so decadent and so little generous that they have left it to the American Baptist, Rockefeller, to restore one of their principal fanes, the Cathedral of Reims.

In 1934 the "P.G." sustained the Catalans against the Clerical Reaction in Spain, and it is at present playing its part in the fight against this reaction in the U.S.A. and Latin America. As the Catalans were beaten last year, and as Bolivia has "gone Fascist" on the day that this is being written, the efforts of "P.G." in these directions have not been very successful. It must be recorded, however, that this movement, though in part anti-semitic, has protested against the torture of the Jews in many countries. We can only hope that "P.G.'s" efforts here will meet with more success.



Whether this Pirma's Gamma's movement will develop into an effective force against the Roman Church in the countries it seeks to serve, or whether, on the other hand, it will evolve into yet another Fascist movement, time alone will show. The anti-semitic racialist side is rather ominous, but at the moment the anti-Catholic side is most emphasized. Racism is an emotional rather than a rational force, but for this very reason it is a powerful lever to employ to wreck that other emotional force, religion. Free-thinkers, who appeal to reason, will watch with interest this growing body of Baltic patriotism and Protestantism, and, *always provided* (it is an essential "if") that "P.G." does not peter out into a Fascist movement, will rejoice if a rejuvenated Scandinavian Protestantism can call a halt to the insidious advance of Roman Christianity in Northern Europe.

BAYARD SIMMONS

## Shakespeare's Religion

(Continued from page 293)

IF, on the one hand, nonsense has been written to prove that Shakespeare was this, that, or the other, without considering what in his writing is purely dramatic, and what the record of his own thought, equal nonsense has been written by those who say we know nothing of him at all. I rather agree with Emerson that "he is the one person, in all modern history, known to us." So myriad-minded a man is, of course, open to many interpretations. But it is quite safe to say he was no fool, and that he had a deal of human nature about him; safe, indeed, to say his heart was as great as his intellect. When Ben Jonson says "He was indeed honest, and of an open and free nature; had an excellent phantasy, brave notions and gentle expressions," we feel every word is true. Shakespeare has written it down for himself. We know he was no bigot—his sympathies are too broad; no ascetic—he delights too much in the mirth of life, and devotes the highest reaches of his genius to the public amusement. His name, as Emerson says, suggests joy and emancipation to the heart of men.

I do not quite agree with Swinburne that "No man ever lived who had less title than Shakespeare to whatever blessing may be reserved for the poor in spirit." This dictum would, I fancy, better apply to Ben Jonson, or certainly to Napoleon. Despite the confident assurance in the sonnets that his work would outlast the gilded monuments of princes, I take it he was cordial, gentle, kindly, and modest; not haughty and self-assertive. His contemporaries so esteemed him. His was not the kind of greatness which says "I am Sir Oracle, and when I ope my mouth let no dog bark," but the rarer kind, which has love, regard, and service for all. He might, I think, have used of himself the words he puts in the mouth of the clown in *Twelfth Night* (iv. 2), "I am one of those gentle ones that will use the Devil himself with courtesy." Only the innate gentleman as well as the true poet could have pictured the storm in those lines of Cordelia:—

"Mine enemy's dog,  
Though he had bit me, should have stood that night  
Against my fire."

Such a passage is one which shows at once the humanity of the man. He was one, I take it, to whom children and animals came spontaneously as knowing his sympathy was large enough to enfold them.

Yet though endowed with those gifts and graces of which Christianity most unwarrantably claims exclusive possession, he lacks all distinctive notes of Christianity. His leading, his favourite characters have no touch of religion. Full as he is of moral reflection, it is always secular morality he teaches. He himself is of the world worldly. The proof is he succeeded in the world, leaving not only fame but riches; building up a comfortable estate together with immortal reputation. He never teaches the Christian theory of the sacrifice of another for the salvation of self. His test is conduct, not creed.

Mr. Gerald Massey rightly says:—

He was not the man to be fretting and fussing about the salvation of his soul. Indeed we are by no means sure that he knew of his own soul being lost. He was a world too wide for any or all of those theories, which are but a birth or abortion of misinterpreted mythology. Certainly Shakespeare did not accept the scheme of salvation and tenets of Historic Christianity, for all his characters put together could not drag it out of him. As Dean Plumptre admits, the Philosophy of Shakespeare is "not a Christian view of life and death." The Ethics of Shakespeare are not more Christian, in any real sense of the word, than those of Sophocles or Goethe. This is the true confession of a devout Christian.<sup>10</sup>

Gervinus, the learned German commentator, gives his opinion:—

Just as Bacon banished religion from Science, so did Shakespeare from Art; and when the former complained that the teachers of religion were against natural philosophy, they were equally against the stage. From Bacon's example it seems clear that Shakespeare left religious matters unnoticed on the same grounds as himself, and took the path of morality in worldly things; in both this has been equally misconstrued, and Le Maistre has proved Bacon's lack of Christianity, as Birch has done that of Shakespeare.<sup>11</sup>

Shakespeare uses the supernatural, but his usage implies no belief, for he uses it as its master. We cannot prove he did not believe in fairies, we can only show he makes them subserve his purposes. Mazzini remarks:—

The divine power has scarcely ever any direct intervention in the Shakesperian drama. The fantastic element, so frequently introduced, if closely examined, will be found never to depart from the individual sphere. His supernatural apparitions are all of them either simply personifications of popular superstition, or, like Caliban and Ariel, symbols of the duality of humanity; or, like the witches in *Macbeth*, the incarnations of human passions.

Ghosts and witches are but the machinery for appealing to the sentiment of superstitious awe. Shakespeare is the Prospero whose wand of imagination calls spirits from the vasty deep, for his own purposes, and gives to airy nothings a local habitation and a name. He took the beliefs and superstitions of men around him as his materials. But ghosts and witches, when they have served his turn, appear no more. Like the goddesses Juno and Ceres before Prospero's cell, they melt into thin air. He could say:—

"graves at my command,  
Have wak'd their sleepers; op'd, and let them forth  
By my so potent art."

Take the belief in astrology. It might be argued that Shakespeare believed it. He puts into the mouth of the good Kent the words:—

"It is the stars—  
The stars above us govern our conditions."

<sup>10</sup> *The Secret Drama of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, p. 469; 1885.

<sup>11</sup> *Shakespeare Commentaries*, p. 886; 1877.



In the same play he puts into the mouth of the cynical and crafty Edmund the scoff:—

This is an excellent foppery of the world, that, when we are sick in fortune—often the surfeit of our own behaviour—we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars: as if we were villains by necessity; fools, by heavenly compulsion; knaves, thieves, and preachers by spherical predominance; drunkards, liars, and adulterers by an enforced obedience of planetary influence: and all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting on: an admirable evasion of whoremaster man to lay his goatish disposition to the charge of a star! My father compounded with my mother under the Dragon's tail; and my nativity was under Ursa Major; so that it follows I am rough and lecherous. Tut, I should have been that I am, had the maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my bastardizing.—*King Lear*, i. 2.

When we find Cassius exclaiming:—

"The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,  
But in ourselves, that we are underlings."

we may begin to suspect that Shakespeare sometimes gave his good characters the utterance of sentiments which his reason derided, and that the true Shakespeare is found, not so much in what he shared in common with his time, but in the thought that soared higher and dived deeper than his time; and this we shall sometimes find expressed in the mouths of his mad folk, his clowns, fools and villains. We shall thus learn to read him, not so much from isolated passages, as from the trend and purpose of his plays. Take *King Lear*, the deepest of all his tragedies, touching the root-springs of human nature. The scope of the whole tragedy is an impeachment of providence, and the blinded Gloucester sums up its teaching in the lines:—

"As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods.  
They kill us for their sport."

A writer in *Blackwood's Magazine* for June, 1851, says:—

It is a more serious imputation on Shakespeare that there is not to be found in his writings any habitual reverence for the Supreme Being, or permanent recognition of the superintendence of an all-wise and beneficent Providence. Expressions, indeed, having that tendency, and second in sublimity and truth to none that ever came from the human mind, are to be found scattered through his works, but it does not seem to have been the permanent direction of his thought.

This observation is just. Had Shakespeare held the conception of God in pious reverence, he could never have once indulged in the profanity in which he revels. Had he held the belief in providence, it would have been manifested throughout his works. Perhaps the strongest expression of this belief is the oft-quoted expression of Hamlet:—

"There's a divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough-hew them how we will."

Yet the whole purport of the play shows an absence of Providence, Hamlet himself dying in the midst of his revenge, and uttering as his last words, "the rest is silence."

The last words of Hamlet, as given in the quarto of 1603, are: "Farewell Horatio, heaven receive my soul." But this orthodox ending did not satisfy Shakespeare, and he altered it to the more impressive and sceptical, "the rest is silence." Note too, how his scepticism breaks out in terming the ghost "Old Mole," "Truepenny," and "fellow in the cellarage." In the famous soliloquy he speaks of death as the undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns, though having, as Goldsmith re-

marks, just seen his father's spirit "piping hot from purgatory." In the edition of 1603 the lines read:—

"For in that dreame of death, when wee awake  
Are borne before an everlasting Judge  
The happy smile and the accurst are damned."

But the judgment of Shakespeare cut out all this orthodoxy.

(Reprinted) J. M. WHEELER

(To be concluded)

## Chinese Cleared of Missionary Slanders

THE missionary nuisance in China is lightly but none the less effectively dealt with by Carl Crow in *My Friends the Chinese*, the latest of his very able publications in connexion with that country. Mr. Crow is an American, with twenty-five years' intimate experience of China. His books—largely devoted to Chinese ways and customs and the Chinese mode of life—have a popularity, I feel, far surpassing that enjoyed by any other modern writer.

"The Catholic missionaries," says Mr. Crow, "were the first to record exaggerated stories about the inherent sinfulness of the Chinese race, all being based on the premise, which appeared perfectly sound in their eyes, that any nation which was of heathen origin and declined to accept Christianity when offered it was *ipso facto* a nation of sin. For many decades, 'The Propagation of the Faith,' a record of French activity in China, abounded in stories of the undoubted devotion, sacrifice, and martyrdom of the missionaries, and of the almost unbelievable wickedness of the Chinese, the two being set forth in striking contrast. There can be no doubt about the sincerity of these pious missionaries, nor can there be any doubt about the fact that many of the stories they recorded were perversions of the truth."

Mr. Crow cites Père Abbe Hue, who was "one of the most famous of these missionary authors," and who went to China in 1838 as a member of the Lazarist congregation. On his return to France he wrote several books about China, which attracted so much attention that they were translated into English and published in London. One of these was *The Chinese Empire*.

"The first two," states Mr. Crow in reference to "the absurd stories" with which the book abounds, "have to do with the Chinese love of gambling. In order to illustrate the depths to which this vice would lead them, Père Hue told of witnessing, with his own eyes, gambling parties in Peking, where some unfortunate would lose all his money, then all his clothes, and finally—without a stitch of clothing on him—would be cast out into the bitter weather to die. According to the pious chronicler, the wicked successful gamblers would then watch the unfortunate freeze to death before returning to their game."

"As one who has figuratively lost his shirt in many a poker game, this strikes me as being rather harsh and unreasonable conduct; but it is not one-half so bad as the anecdote the good padre records to build up further evidence as to the sinfulness of gambling in general, and of the special sinfulness of gambling in China in particular."

"He said that occasionally two Chinese, neither of whom had any money or other possessions, would meet; and, having nothing else with which to gamble, would take chances on each others fingers. The bets were made, and the dice were thrown. When the result was known, the loser accommodately stuck his finger under a wooden block, and the winner of the game chopped it off with a cleaver."

Having in this way disposed of the sin of gambling, Père Hue turned his attention to drunkenness.

"He started with the statement," relates Mr. Crow, "that Chinese are great drunkards, that drunkenness is one of the besetting sins of the country, and with gambling one of the principal reasons for the poverty of the people. He explains that while in South China the people drink a comparatively mild rice wine, this is not true in North China, where a strong brandy is consumed. This brandy (he says) is so strong—and is consumed by the inebriates in such large quantities—that inflammable



fumes from the liquor are exhaled from every pore of the body, and sometimes the poor drunkard, in lighting his pipe, sets fire to himself, and is consumed in a burst of flame.

"To those of us who have lived in China at least as long as Père Huc, and have observed the liquor consumption of the Chinese with a more sophisticated and experienced eye than a pious missionary could be expected to possess, I would say that his appraisal of the drinking habits of the Chinese was entirely wrong. I have frequented the taverns and consorted with the tipplers of a dozen or more different countries, and I know of no race and have heard of no race more temperate than the Chinese.

"Père Huc next turns his attention to the family relations of the Chinese, and states that Chinese marriages are almost invariably unhappy, and that Chinese husbands always beat their wives. This statement, to one who has lived in China, is almost as surprising as those about drunkenness and the cruelty of gamblers. Whatever other faults the Chinese may have, a resort to physical violence is the last of them."

"Missionaries who came to China later," states Mr. Crow, "did not go to the lengths of Père Huc; but many of them have quoted incidents from his book *The Chinese Empire*, and all of them have painted a dark picture of Chinese life."

"It is an interesting and enlightening fact," he proceeds, after referring to the suspicion and distrust with which the missionary is regarded by the Chinese, "that while business-men in China generally bear testimony to the honesty of the Chinese, missionaries are almost unanimous in denouncing them as thieves and rascals. It is obvious that the business-man has not only had more opportunities for observation, but by means of his experience is better qualified to form an opinion. It boils down to this: The business-man, by taking obvious precautions, finds his dealings with Chinese to be eminently satisfactory, and that the Chinese are, as a rule, honest. The missionary, ignorant of the ordinary technique of trading, falls into traps set by his own ignorance and inexperience, and blames the Chinese."

Appreciation by Mr. Crow of the Chinese character—in contrast with the attitude adopted by the missionaries—is eloquently expressed in the words "that, in spite of their nonconformity to Christian beliefs, they possess many sound virtues, and a code of ethics which has endured for a period long antedating the Christian era."

Passing to other pages in his *My Friends, the Chinese*, Mr. Crow says that as soon as a schoolboy learns to write he is set to work copying an essay of which the following paragraph forms a fair sample: "Fate rules our life. Whether your life is long or short, every one of us has to meet his end in the long run. Ancient writers are correct when they say that life is from the cradle to the grave. How futile it is then for us to have any doubt on this subject! In reading over the writings of people in the past, we find that everyone held the same view on life and death. Though we are living now, we have to give a sigh about our near future as we contemplate our fate. In our hearts, who does not know that life and death are both empty, and that neither longevity nor an early death makes any difference?"

Mr. Crow warmly extols the tenderness with which Chinese children are treated—the girls no less than the boys.

"The oldest son of the family," he goes on to say, "is soon made to realize the responsibility of his position. He is repeatedly told that the five buttons on his jacket are there to remind him of the five Chinese virtues—benevolence, justice, propriety, wisdom, honesty."

Surely a moral code that needs no elaboration!

Nor is there anything in all it embraces derived from Christianity. The Chinese conception long pre-dates that era. Clear it must be, then, that in the five Chinese virtues we have a shattering refutation of the fiction that Christianity is the foundation of the world's moral standards—in other words, that except through the testaments, Old and New, we would never have been able to discriminate between right and wrong.

FRANK HILL

Sydney, N.S.W. Australia

## Bearding the Prophets in their Palaces

"The beard of the prophet" used to be a proverbial formula for swear-words. Mr. Rom Landau, in his recent book, *Search for To-morrow*, declares himself a little sick of these bearded ecclesiastics. Mr. Landau went to Palestine in the hope of getting all the Holy Men of Jerusalem to join in a common appeal for peace. He came away utterly disillusioned. He asked the Latin Patriarch if for once "all the creeds" could unite for peace. The Patriarch was shocked at the bare idea. Instead of meeting the friendly invitation, he concentrated all his attention on the expression: "all the creeds." "Truth," he said "is only One, and Indivisible." He added, "My Church is the Only one, there is no other religion."

Mr. Landau next visited the Greek Orthodox Patriarch who was quite pessimistic as to any good likely to come from a union of religious creeds. He frankly confessed that "We meet in public and at congresses, and love each other in front of other people. But all this is sheer hypocrisy—the one concern is how to increase their own flock. Universal fellowship interests them only for reasons of propaganda. They don't have it at heart. I have ceased to believe in the words 'unity' and 'fellowship' when they come from the heads of churches."

The Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem was no more encouraging. "Religious customs," he said, "in Judaism are the vehicle for a very real spiritual experience; we do not need any reforms."

The Shiekh Ismail Al Hafez was in a most aggressive mood. "He spoke of the necessity for fighting Atheism. He had become anti-Jewish only because of the Atheism and Communism of which he accused the Jews."

When Mr. Landau interviewed the Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem, the Bishop asked him to dinner "to discuss the question of an understanding." Mr. Landau learnt nothing from this entertaining prelate. In fact, says Mr. Landau, "I wondered whether the kindly man had either the burning faith or an interest sufficiently vital to provide the driving power necessary for such a task."

In the end Mr. Landau came to the conclusion that all these clerics without exception had nothing whatever in common except that each of them was cultivating a very well-trimmed beard.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH

## HEAVEN

FISH (fly-replete, in depth of June,  
Dawdling away their wat'ry noon)  
Ponder deep wisdom, dark or clear.  
Each secret fishy hope or fear.  
Fish say, they have their Stream and Pond;  
But is there anything Beyond?  
This life cannot be All, they swear,  
For how unpleasant, if it were!  
One may not doubt that, somehow, Good  
Shall come of Water and of Mud;  
And, sure, the reverent eye must see  
A Purpose in Liquidity.  
We darkly know, by Faith we cry,  
The future is not Wholly Dry.  
Mud unto mud!—Death eddies near—  
Not here the appointed End, not here!  
But somewhere, beyond Space and Time,  
Is wetter water, slimier slime!  
And there (they trust) there swimmeth One  
Who swam ere rivers were begun,  
Immense, of fishy form and mind,  
Squamous, omnipotent, and kind;  
And under that Almighty Fin,  
The littlest fish may enter in.  
Oh! never fly conceals a hook,  
Fish say, in the Eternal Brook,  
But more than mundane weeds are there,  
And mud, celestially fair;  
Fat caterpillars drift around,  
And Paradisal grubs are found;  
Unfading moths, immortal flies,  
And the worm that never dies.  
And in that Heaven of all their wish,  
There shall be no more land, say fish.

1913. Rupert Brooke, *Collected Poems*.



## Acid Drops

From the *Referee*—"Two little girls forgot to be Princesses." The paper is chronicling the fact that when the King and Queen left Portsmouth on their trip to Canada, the two Princesses cried. They "forgot to be Princesses!" We should prefer to say that they remembered they were two little girls crying because their parents were leaving them. Or perhaps they did not remember or forget anything, but just behaved as nearly every pair of little girls would when saying good-bye to their parents for a lengthy period. Why do these papers carry the policy of pleasing fools and flattering toadies so far as to—by implication—question whether the Royal Family are capable of ordinary human feelings?

Admiral George King-Hall explained to the Bible Society how the Bible once saved him, and, incidentally, his ship. When he went to sea, his mother gave him a Bible, and he promised to read a chapter every day. Later he had excellent proof of the value of the practice. He had gone to bed, after reading his nightly chapter, but awakened and was moved to go on deck. He went, and was just in time to alter the course of the ship and save it, and the crew, and the copy of the Bible mother gave him, from destruction. So the Admiral went on his knees and thanked God. We were so moved by this truthful story that we felt inclined to write the Prime Minister asking him to order that every officer in the Navy should read a chapter of the Bible before going to sleep. As the German and Italian officers will not carry out this practice, this would give us a tremendous advantage when war comes. We should add that Admiral King-Hall is 73 years of age, retired, and spends his time writing religious works. The above statement may be taken as a sample of his imaginative efforts.

A proposed settlement on the religious education question in Liverpool has at last been reached. Liverpool is to build fifteen schools for Roman Catholics at a cost of £500,000, and the Roman Catholic authorities are to rent them for £10,000 per annum. They will also have the right to veto the appointment of any teacher by the L.E.A., "whose duty will include the giving of religious instruction." So far the proposals have not been accepted by the Roman Catholics, but it is unlikely that they will object. Whether the extreme Protestant element in Liverpool—a city notorious for sectarian squabbles—will submit to the proposals remains to be seen. And once again we must point out that there would have been no violent religious passions roused, no angry bickerings, if Secular Education were accepted for all State-schools. It will come, of course, one day.

At a meeting of the Friends of Reunion, the other day, the Rev. B. W. S. Green "spoke of a successful open-air campaign against Atheist speakers, conducted by a Roman Catholic priest, a Congregationalist and himself, sitting on the same platform." It is a pity that the journal from which we have quoted—or Mr. Green himself—did not give more verifiable particulars. We are always anxious to get hold of the names of the "Atheist speakers," who are so easily wiped up by members of Christian sects. Our experience has shown that very few parsons or priests are ready to do battle for their faith where a known Atheist is given equal opportunities for reply.

Fr. Langdale, in an address on Boys' Clubs, the other week, was very pessimistic. He said the "parish priests constantly complain that 80 per cent of the boys are lost to the Church after they leave school." Mr. Ted Moriarty declared at the same meeting, that "a campaign of immoral and immodest ragging" went on in places where boys and youths were employed, which put all thoughts of religion out of the victim's head. Well, all we can say is that as the Church surrounds almost everybody with religion in some shape or form from the day of birth to that of death, strongly supported by the Government,

Local Councils, Education Authorities, and the B.B.C., as well as by our national newspapers, and special ones like the *Church Times* and the *Universe*, such a confession of failure is outrageous. What more is wanted to surround the unfortunate youngsters? Is the loss to religion and the Church due to their being found out?

Dr. Major, who is the Principal of Ripon Hall, Oxford, said, recently, that "many of the greatest Church reforms, including the Reformation, could never have been achieved but for the State," and he added that "if the Church of England were disestablished, a policy of incorporation into the Papal Church would probably proceed apace and end in a disastrous schism in our national Church, and an immense advance in secularism." Here we see that Dr. Major has come to the view so strongly held by Bradlaugh and other Secularist leaders that, in the ultimate, the fight will be between the Catholic Church and Secularism—which, of course, means Atheism and Freethought.

The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, with a pious individual named Judge Rutherford at the head, is flooding the country with tons of tracts from the United States. Rutherford stumped England years ago with a lecture, in which he claimed that "Millions Now Living Will Never Die"—and lots of people, their minds debased with true Christianity, jumped at the Gospel news of eternal life here. They were quite used to being told that there would be eternal life in Paradise, with Jesus, Moses, and Peter, but Rutherford knew quite well that this would prove no bait. So he put eternity here, and, we believe, is still preaching it. Unfortunately, he has seriously disturbed the readers of the *Universe* and other Catholics, who also prefer eternity here and now, rather than heaven in the hereafter so the journal has commissioned Fr. Thurston, S.J., to examine Rutherford's claims and, of course, to show that they are all nonsense. For our part, we can only see in Rutherford an extension of the credulity, and superstition, which has always been fostered by all the other Churches.

The *Christian World* is confident that if war comes "it is God who will win, whoever loses." It is always God who wins every war, for whichever side comes out on top God is thanked for giving them victory. And even the Christians who are beaten lack the moral courage to praise God for "chastening them." It reminds one of the lines attributed to the King of Prussia after a victory over the French:—

I write in haste, my dear Augusta  
We've given the French another buster.  
Ten thousand Frenchmen sent below,  
Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

Whether genuine or not, it expresses the real spirit of Christian thanksgiving after winning a war.

The Master of the Temple, Canon Hanson, gave an interesting talk over the Radio on Jane Austen. He admits that "there is no sign whatever in her novels of any deep religious struggles." But it would never do to let a chance slip of advertising his own sectarianism. Canon Hanson concluded his talk, reported in the *Listener*, by praising "the Church of England Catechism," which lays stress upon moral integrity, upon kindness, loyalty, honesty," etc. Canon Hanson seems to have a different copy of the "Catechism" from the one we all know so well. In our copy the child is asked to "Rehearse the articles of thy belief," and does so, without straying for a moment from the Apostles' Creed—wherein not a word is said about the moral qualities. Only after an interminably distressing catechising, the Creed and also the crudely inadequate "Ten Commandments" are dragged in to confuse the infant mind. Then, sandwiched between these dry husks of sheer primitive dogmatism, and a concluding terror of "sacramental" teaching, a few words are used to include "duty towards my neighbour," and "honour and obedience to all that are put in authority." Canon Hanson should read his Catechism again.



The Rev. Percy S. Carden (Methodist) says that "if it were known by our congregations that we as ministers were taking lessons in first aid and ambulance work, and maybe A.R.P. work, it would lead to a feeling of depression." Probably Mr. Carden believes that many members of the Methodist Church will expect their Ministers to trust in the Lord. They ought to know them better. Trust in the Lord is very well in peace-time, but before the cold facts of an air-raid there are not many Christians, from the Archbishop downward—or upward—who would not trust more in a deep shelter than in the protecting care of the whole of the Trinity with a few archangels working overtime.

It is interesting, of course, to find clerics and unimaginative scholars interesting themselves in the Bible—as literature! Half a column in the *Sunday Times* is occupied by a Cambridge cleric explaining how in ancient religious literature of more or less poetic form

the elliptic diction and the parallelism, repetitive or antithetical, are not lost; nor the resultant short, terse, lines, the couplet form into which these were thrown, the strophe and antistrophe.

The writer proceeds to illustrate the beauties of these Bible "repetitive parallelisms" by quoting the glorification of some of the most abominable acts of most barbarous times. Jacl—for instance:—

She put her hand to the nail and  
Her right hand to the workmen's hammer and  
With the hammer she smote Sisera,  
She smote off his head,  
When she had pierced and  
Stricken through his temples.

One has only to imagine a German description of some outrage on a helpless Jew, or an Italian "poem" about "How we assassinated the children of Guernica," or, indeed, an admirer of Jack-the-Ripper turning into faultless verse the exploits of that hero, to understand the curious literary "kink" which cares to praise the literary merits of the "elliptic diction" used to "blazon evil deeds or consecrate a crime."

Paraphrase may sometimes be remarkably witty—even when not so intended. We learn that the Rev. James Hope Moulton translates "I buffet my body," as "I give my body a black eye." The *Methodist Recorder* reminds us that the Christian Church has always taught self-denial and has sometimes "imposed upon its members a severe technique of formal discipline." The late Mr. Kensitt used to carry with him a trunk-full of instruments of torture—whips—thorns—hair-shirts—and the like, to illustrate his lectures on "Catholic Practices in Protestant Churches." We believe these insanities are still used by fanatical churchmen.

There are queer distinctions (mostly without a difference) in Christian minds when comparing their ideal Christ with similar men's actions. The Rev. Dr. J. G. McKenzie says that Jesus was "self-possessed," but not "self-confident." Jesus had "hesitations and doubts," but "once He saw the way He went straight forward." One could say the same of most ordinary people—let us say Mr. Neville Chamberlain for instance. Dr. McKenzie contrasts Paul—to Paul's detriment. St. Paul was "self-confident" (or as mere human beings would say "cock-sure.") McKenzie is quite right. A man must be fatally off his balance when he dares to say, "I can do all things," whether he is "strengthened" by Christ or by Whisky.

The Rev. A. M. Chirgwin—Secretary of the London Missionary Society—finds the Christian Mission prospects in Japan "Not Discouraging"—to Christians, of course, he means. How can it be otherwise? Japan has studied the Bible. It has studied the methods of all the Christian nations. It has had its own Naval Mission in England for years. It has been using British and German munitions of all sorts in its Christian wars against China. It may have fallen a trifle short of God's com-

mands as to the utter extermination of man, woman, child and cattle; they have not (yet) destroyed their enemies "under the harrow," or made them "pass through the fire," but these little things will be forgiven them in the light of their wholesale bombings of women and children, of their tortures of prisoners, and of their utter indifference to humanitarian civilization. Yes, Mr. Chirgwin, the "prospects are not discouraging." Christianity is winning in Japan.

The British Institute of Public Opinion, which claims that by its method of investigation it can arrive at a substantially trustworthy analysis of opinion on a given subject, has just completed an enquiry concerning the belief of immortality. The analysis shows that of the adult population 49 per cent believed in immortality, 33 per cent did not believe, and 18 per cent gave no answer. In the youngest group (21-29) the number of believers fell to 42 per cent. In the group (50 and over) the number of believers rose to 52 per cent. The figures seem fairly convincing, judging from what one would deduce from personal experience. The *News-Chronicle* heads its notice of the census with:—

Lying at the core of almost every religion is a belief in man's immortality.

This is not scientifically accurate, or rather, it is a muddled and misleading presentation of the scientific position. But it is true that connected with every religion there is a rare lot of "lying" in existence.

A poet writes in the *British Weekly*, "Greet the unseen with a cheer." That is good, sound religious advice, only it is incomplete. We should also listen to the unheard with reverence, lay hands on the untouchable with all our might, look forward to living in a land where life is non-existent, and with confidence trust ourself to what is not there. If we are going to be religious let our religion be of the kind that nothing can destroy or disprove.

We have often expressed our opinion of the queer morality of the Gifford Trustees, whose idea of carrying out the wishes of a dead testator is to invite none but orthodox clergy to deliver sermons opposed to the stipulations of the heterodox Trust committed to their charge. The current year's lecturer is to be Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr. This man is head of the Orthodox Union Theological Seminary of New York. He is described by Dr. D. R. Davies as a master in the art of "prophetic interpretation of world affairs." "He has something of the insight of the Old Testament prophets," and his

ten years' work as a teacher of Christian ethics to successive generations of theological students amply prove that he was divinely guided.

What a testimonial for the "lecturer" of a rationalistic "Trust."

We understand it is not true that during a recent sitting of the House of Commons, one of the members interrupted the proceedings by calling "I spy a stranger," and afterwards explained that he had noticed truth on the Treasury Bench.

## Fifty Years Ago

MAN, defined as "a rational animal" should rather be characterized as an animal capable of being rational. The Age of Reason which dawned in the eighteenth century has to expand a deal ere it reaches its perfect day. Freethought yet needs much work and energy, and those who bestow this cannot expect to see the full result in their lifetime. The conclusions of science and criticism are gradually spreading to the masses, but there remains a vast body of indifferents always more accessible on the side of inherited superstitious instincts than on that of reason.

*The Freethinker*, May 12, 1889



# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**R. H. KIRBY.**—We note your appreciation of *Freethought and the Child*. As we have already said, it was written for Freethinkers mainly, although we hope many religious folk will read it. They will then understand better the position of the 100 per cent Freethinker.

**M. J. YATES.**—Obliged to hold over letter till next week. It requires too much space for this issue.

**J. DELL.**—Thanks for letter and portrait. My regards to the original. Pleased to see you any time.

To Advertising and Distributing the *Freethinker*.—**E. Horrocks**, £2; **Mrs. Trask**, 10s.

**KOJO ACKASON.**—Kind wishes heartily reciprocated.

**A. SOLOMON.**—We are sending on your suggestion to the headquarters of the World Union of Freethinkers, but we are afraid that in the present State of the Continent, desirable as the proposals may be, there are considerable difficulties in the way. But the suggestions are certainly worth bearing in mind.

**W. T. NICHOLAS** (New York).—Pleased you found the book of so much use. We hardly think it is for us to interfere in the matter in our columns. With regard to suggestions we will bear them in mind.

**H. MONTMORENCY.**—You are right in saying that the Bible forbidden fruit is not called an apple, but it has been generally taken as such by sound theological teachers. Anyway the fruit was forbidden, and disaster followed a breach of the command.

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

*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. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.*

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

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

## Sugar Plums

We are nearing rapidly the date of the Annual Conference, and the hope that those who require hotel or other accommodations will write the General Secretary without delay. We prophecy there will be no war till after Whitsuntide, so fears on that head are unnecessary.

An outing to Malham Cove, by coach, is being arranged for the Monday following the Annual Conference at Bradford. The demand for coaches at Whitsuntide is great, and seats for the outing have to be booked at once, extra coaches not being available at short notice. Tickets 8s. 6d. each, which includes lunch, and tea, must be booked in advance to the Secretary of the Bradford Branch, N.S.S., Mr. H. Y. Rogers, 7 Spicer Street, Little Horton, Bradford, Yorks.

The Chorley Branch N.S.S. recently applied for the *Freethinker* to be placed in the reading-room of the Public Library. This was refused by the Library Committee and endorsed by the General Council. Councillor Mrs. Edwards, in moving that the *Freethinker* be supplied to would-be readers (supported by Councillor Williams) said that if the Council supported the Library Committee it meant that the Council "was not ready to allow the people to think for themselves." Of course the Council is not ready for that. The clergy of Chorley are not ready for it. In fact it is rather a dangerous practice for the general public to do any thinking at all. We agree with the Council and the clergy that the people should not be encouraged to think at all, or if they will think, then it is best to encourage them to think they are thinking—much on the lines that parrots think.

All the same, the members of the Council were not elected to protect the Churches from criticism. Neither were they elected to use the public reading-room for the exhibition of religious newspapers. Their duties are purely secular, and if the religion of the majority of the Councillors encouraged honesty towards the ratepayers, and fairness towards everybody, they would not set themselves up as an amateur and very bungling Inquisition.

The *Freethinker* is to be read by those who wish to read it in a great many of the Public Libraries in this country, but the Chorley Councillors are evidently of opinion that the religious forces of their delightful town would suffer badly if more people read this journal. And, strictly between ourselves, we agree with them. But the injustice to the ratepayers remains.

Sir Charles Trevelyan thinks that the time has arrived when the B.B.C. might play a part in stimulating "serious thought" in England. We agree; it has more than just arrived. It is long over due. He added:—

The B.B.C. must not take sides. It must not be afraid of disregarding class or political taboos or religious prejudices.

But the B.B.C. has always been dominated by these taboos and prejudices. And it does this, not by deliberately and publicly excluding certain ideas, but by pretending to give both sides a hearing. Of the large number of Freethinkers in this country, no one has ever been able to set forth the case against the churches and against religious beliefs who has any claim to represent unbelievers. Meanwhile, we are deluged by religious services and addresses, and for several hours on Sunday it is a case of listening to religion or switching off. The policy of protecting religion from clear-cut uncompromising criticism was commenced by the pious Sir John Reith—pitchforked from one high place to another—and it has continued with little modification until to-day.

Many of our readers will be interested in reading the address that was read at the cremation of the late H. S. Salt:—

Friends; It is not usual, I think, for a funeral address to have been written in anticipation, and by the person who has died; but I ask you in this case to excuse the arrangement as one that is likely to save trouble to somebody, and give the deceased the assurance that the words said at his cremation will be what he himself would have desired. He promises, in return, to be brief.

Names are very liable to be misunderstood: and when I say that I shall die, as I have lived, a Rationalist, Socialist, Pacifist and Humanitarian, I must make my meaning clear. I wholly disbelieve in the present established religion; but I have a very firm religious faith of my own—a Creed of Kinship, I call it—a belief that in years yet to come there will be a recognition of the brotherhood between man and man, nation and nation, human and sub-human, which will transform a state of semi-savagery, as we have it, into one of civilization, when there will be no such barbarity as warfare, or the



robbery of the poor by the rich, or the ill-usage of the lower animals by mankind.

Such is my faith; and it is because I hold all supernatural doctrines taught under the name of religion to be actually harmful, in diverting attention from the real truths, that I believe them to have a tendency, as Ingersoll expressed it, to "petrify the heart."

But love and friendship are fortunately quite independent of creeds, and in this farewell I would say a word of deep gratitude for the wonderful kindness that I have met with throughout life, whether from the comparatively few who have been in close agreement with my thoughts, or some of the many who have dissented from them. Of the personal love that has been my portion I will not attempt to speak.

The Executive of the N.S.S. has made arrangements with Mr. G. Whitehead for open-air propaganda from May till September. The ground to be covered will stretch from Glasgow to Swansea. Mr. Whitehead will begin to-day (May 14) in Liverpool, and address meetings each evening until Friday. Local N.S.S. Branches will fully co-operate at the meetings, and it is hoped that unattached Freethinkers will help by making the meetings known, and giving personal support. The Executive of the N.S.S. will be responsible for the expenses of the campaign.

From the report to hand we are pleased to see that the Glasgow Branch N.S.S. has had a very successful year. The propaganda has been carried over an enlarged area, and the general run of meetings was very successful. There has also been a good sale of literature, which in its way, is even more important than anything else. Get people to read and we have them. Plans have been made for the coming out-door season, and we hope the Branch will receive the support it deserves from Glasgow Freethinkers. With its huge population, and the considerable number of Freethinkers in the City, next year's report should better the one recently issued. We are also pleased to note that on the financial side the Branch is left with a balance in hand. This should be bettered.

The Glasgow Branch announces a Rambling Club has been formed, and under the guidance of the energetic Mr. T. Findlay, a "Ramble" has been arranged for Sunday, May 14. The Ramble is of the surprise order, the place selected not being disclosed until the party meet. The meeting-place will be at the Tram Terminus, Milngavie, at 11.30 a.m. The Ramblers will bring their own provisions with them. We hope there will be a good turn out. Non-members are welcome.

We are pleased to receive a good report of the open-air Freethought meetings being held in Manchester. Mr. Atkinson is, we understand, the principal speaker, and he is ably backed by Messrs. McCall, Taylor and Newton. We hope the success of the meetings continues. Open-air speaking is hard work, and one can never be quite sure where it ends. The old saying has it that what Manchester says to-day the rest of England will say to-morrow. We hope that is being illustrated by many carrying away with them the influence that radiates from Stevenson Square.

In 1939 a Conway Memorial lecture was delivered by Marjorie Bowen. Her subject was "Ethics in Modern Art" (Watts and Co., 1s.) There are many who would challenge the title by asserting that the artist, whether he speaks with a brush, with a chisel, or with a pen, is not virtually concerned with ethics at all, but it can scarcely be denied, as the lecturer pointed out, that the artist cannot help chronicling or at least criticizing "shifting values in manners, points of view, and customs." But one must point out, not to misrepresent Miss Bowen's position, that she advises that we should "ignore the artist who works with a purely ethical purpose." Great artists never preach, and when a painter,

a writer, or a dramatist concert his work into a sermon, he forfeits all claim to greatness. A work of art should be parsimonious with italics.

Miss Bowen's lecture is plentifully strewn with good things, but if we wished to find fault we should select the passage in which she says:—

I mean by the artist one of creative ability, professing one of the fine arts, not an imitator however skilful, nor a craftsman however clever. If this is the starting point science has clearly become the enemy of the artist.

It is very easy to misrepresent this passage, for we think the speaker had in mind mainly the "methods of mechanical reproduction of pictures and statuary, and the cheapening of printing," which enables many "to pass as artists and to receive rewards far beyond their merits." But there is a great danger of Miss Bowen being seriously misunderstood. Perhaps in no other direction is "creative ability" and imaginative power so triumphantly exhibited as it is in pure science. Music (at least so far as the pleasure derived from rhythmical sounds is concerned) and painting are amongst the earliest manifestations of art, and writing is of very considerable antiquity. But thousands of generations had to pass to permit that development of the imagination to take place, which made possible the birth of pure science. And one may safely challenge any effort of the imagination in art, or literature, as at all comparable with, say, the Newtonian conception of universal gravitation, or the conception of general evolution. Mere imitation plays a much greater part in the plastic and literary arts than it does in pure science. Perhaps one indication of this is the rarity of the great scientific thinker compared with the appearance of the great writer or painter. This point of view opens up a great field of controversy, and we have space for no more than a mere note.

## Voltaire's Debt to England

### II.

ALTHOUGH Voltaire may have known some English when he first landed in England, he soon decided that he could make very little headway without a good knowledge of the language; and with that determination which was so characteristic of him in later life, he set to work to acquire it. He must have made good progress, for before long he was actually making his notes in English. He did not at first go to London—only when he found he could talk and understand the foreign language did he visit the capital, though at the time it appears he was very poor and almost friendless. Even the Bolingbrokes were away somewhere in the country. However, he called upon an Englishman whom he had known in Paris, Everard Falkner, a rich silk merchant, and whose kindness and help to Voltaire must have been so great and timely that their friendship only ceased at his death. Voltaire dedicated his famous play *Zaire* to him, and never forgot what he had done for the poor and friendless Frenchman.

He met many Quakers, for whose religion he always expressed the liveliest sympathy. One of Voltaire's notebooks has been found dealing with this period, and C. B. Chase gives an interesting account of it in *The Young Voltaire*:—

For the most part this notebook is in the form of short terse maxims, and of longer stories and anecdotes, often humorous, but always with a definite instructive point; sometimes he made sweeping generalities, at other times he records particular incidents. The amount of space which he devotes to the differences between religions, and to the contra-



dictions in various creeds, show that comparative religion held great interest for him; a number of notes and anecdotes show that he was carefully studying the history of the country; while throughout the note-book there are fresh, clear impressions of contemporary England.

Here are some extracts from the notebook on religion (verbatim):—

England is the meeting of all religions, as the Royal Exchange is the "rendez-vous" of all foreigners.

It seems that one deals in England with the Quakers as with the peers of the realm, which give their verdict upon their honour, not upon their oath. [Contrasting England with France]—We arrive at the same work by different ways; a chartusian friar kneels and prostrates himself all along before me, a Quaker speaks to me always covered, both do so to follow the Gospel in the most rigorous sense.

[Religion is]—Ignorant supported by more ignorant men. Dunces are the founders of all religions; men of wit founders of all heresies; men of understanding laugh at both.

To get some authority over others one must make oneself as unlike them as one can. 'Tis a sure way of dazzling the eyes of the crowd. So the priest appears in long gown, etc.

Jewish religion is the mother of Christianity, the grandmother of mohametism.

When I see Christians cursing Jews, methinks I see children beating their fathers.

Equally interesting are his remarks on the English people:—

The English is full of thoughts, French all in miens, compliments, sweet words, and curious of engaging outside, overflowing in words obsequious with pride, and very much self-concern'd under the appearance of a pleasant modesty. The English is sparing of words, openly proud and unconcerned; he gives the most quick birth to his thoughts, for fear of losing his time. A King of England is a necessary thing to preserve the spirit of liberty, as a post to a fencer to exert himself.

In England everybody is publik spirited. In France everybody is concerned in his own interest only.

For Bolingbroke and Pope, Voltaire had the greatest admiration. Indeed, when later on in France he composed one of his most expressive onslaughts against religion, he attributed it to Bolingbroke. It was called *An Important Examination by Lord Bolingbroke or the Tomb of Fanaticism* and it professed to have been written about 1736, but actually was not published till 1767. It had a preface supposed to be by the publishers which said it was a new edition of one of the most eloquent and profound books ever written against bigotry, and that it was taken from the posthumous works of Lord Bolingbroke and collated with the manuscripts. As a matter of fact, it is true that the work contained Bolingbroke's own ideas on the Bible and religion, but Voltaire was forced to use his friend's name as a mask to escape prosecution. This *Examination* is one of Voltaire's finest works against revealed religion and deserves to be known far better than it is. And—though it may be heresy so say so—some of Voltaire's pamphlets on the same subject have badly dated, and even are tiresome to read these days. In their own day, of course, they accomplished wonders, especially in France; but we have gone far away from our own Deists, and it was their ideas and arguments which Voltaire used so effectively, and yet which never went as far as Atheism. This should always be remembered when discussing Voltaire and his influence on contemporary thought. In England, however far they went in attacking religion, our Deists seemed to have been too afraid to be tarred

with the brush of something which invoked intense horror, the absolute denial of a Supreme Being. And Voltaire, who had studied most of their works seems to have fully agreed with them. In this he is in direct contrast with Diderot, who started with Deism but was obliged to come to Atheism, the position of D'Holbach, Helvetius, and some of the other original thinkers in France who had felt the futility of halting before a "God of Nature."

How great was Bolingbroke's attack on religion can be seen in the way in which Leland in his *Deistical Writers* deals with his work and influence—nearly half of a big book; yet one can truthfully say that he is almost forgotten now, and very little read except by students. His ideas, however, can be found in Voltaire's *Important Examination* which belonged definitely to the period when at last, the brilliant wit, irony, and scepticism of the great French writer culminated in frontal attacks on the Christian religion, a period, as J. M. Robertson shows, which began at the earliest in 1761.

Chase thinks that the three men who had the greatest influence on Voltaire during his stay in England were Pope, Swift, and Bolingbroke, and that "he was probably influenced more by what he heard these men discuss, and by what he discussed with them, than he was by all the books he read throughout his stay." And considering the number of great people Voltaire met socially—Berkeley, Congreve, Gay, Walpole, Clarke, Peterborough, are among the number—it is a remarkable tribute to them.

Voltaire's impressions on what he saw and learnt here during his stay can be found in his *Letters on the English or Philosophical Letters*. There are twenty-four of these, seven of them dealing with religion, the others discussing government, commerce, the theatre and philosophy. A good many of the letters, if not all, were afterwards reproduced with little change in the *Philosophical Dictionary*.

That his book made a profound impression upon cultured opinion in France is admitted by most historians. Voltaire saw the immense advantages derived from a better order of government, and particularly from liberty of thought and justice, and he proved to his compatriots that there were other forms of ruling worth at least comparing with their own and even perhaps far better than their own. And he succeeded in making England known far better than he expected, for later on, when a certain amount of "Anglomania" became rampant in France, he was disgusted at the way in which "the booksellers (who are always in style) sell novels under the label 'English' in the same way that people sell English ribbons and lace"—as he ironically observed.

Chase makes one criticism about the *Philosophical Letters* worth repeating. They are not so much, he says, an account of England as a criticism of France. Voltaire, writing almost always with an eye on the French public and their reaction to his book, made this his chief object in his account of English ways and thought. He wanted to arouse French interest, not hostility, and his book is a masterpiece of subtle psychology and the understanding of French character. It is impossible to deal with it in detail here, and, as I have already stated, many of the best articles in the *Philosophical Dictionary* are reprints of various chapters. But no student of the work of Voltaire can afford to miss reading this book which shows how completely its author had imbibed English ideas, and how great this influence was on France and French opinion. Moreover, Chase insists that the "rhythmic, concise, brilliant, witty, typically French" style possessed by Voltaire in all his later writings was the direct outcome of his contact with English writers in general and Swift in particular. "It



allowed him," he adds, "to be serious, witty, entertaining, and didactic, all in one breath."

Voltaire gained a world when he came to England; it broadened his outlook to an almost unbelievable extent. Of course he was already a sceptic—who would not be who had inbibed Bayle and Fontenelle? But when he studied Collins, Woolston, Tindal, and Bolingbroke, he found himself equipped for his fight with the Church, though he was not to enter the battle seriously for many years to come.

"The contrast of England to France," declared Chase, "was the conclusive test-by-fire of all of Voltaire's early theories and instincts. It was the final formative influence of his life; in England were definitely determined his future aims and ambitions."

Whether Voltaire would have remained a convinced Deist had he never visited England is another question. He might have gone the way of Diderot and D'Holbach, the way which led to philosophical Atheism, the only logical way to Freethought and Humanism. It is a pity he never went so far.

H. CUTNER

## Byron

I AM gratified to know that Mr. Kent liked my paper on "Abodes of Genius," and interested in his account of some memorials to Byron which were unknown to me. My references to the repeated refusal of the authorities to permit any memorial of the poet to be placed in the Abbey may suggest that I admire his character. This is not so, I regard him as a selfish sensualist; probably the only woman for whom he had a sincere affection was his half-sister Augusta Leigh, the mother of his child Medora.

He seduced and abandoned Claire Clairmont, and in a letter to his publisher, Murray, referred to the unhappy girl as "a damned bitch." Shelley who, was a pure-minded man, in one of his letters to the poet and novelist, T. L. Peacock, said: "He associates with wretches who seem almost to have lost the gait and physiognomy of man, and who do not scruple to avow practices which are not only not named but I believe seldom even conceived in England. He allows fathers and mothers to bargain with him for their daughters, and is familiar with the lowest sort of women, the people his gondolieri pick up on the street."

Trelawny (and no one knew the poets better) wrote: "Byron and Shelley, what a contrast—the one the incarnation of rank selfishness—the other of a bountiful and loving nature."

Contemporary judgment, as expressed in an article by Dean Inge, is as follows: "I have not counted the mistresses whom he is said to have possessed in about eighteen years; but if he did not quite break the record of King Solomon, it was only because his life was cut short as 36. In addition he had a daughter by his half-sister, and a series of boy favourites with whom his relations can hardly have been innocent."

Byron while professing friendship for Shelley acted a traitor's part in the affair of the Hoppner letter. My old friend, H. S. Salt, whose recent death we deplore, said to me: "But that he (Byron) was not very solicitous about the fair fame of Allegra's mother is clear from the vile things he says about both her and Shelley in his reply to Mr. Hoppner when the scandal was first reported to him."

Byron's letters to that atrocious old reprobate Lady Melbourne give details of his amours, in which her ladyship delighted in abetting him; his marriage was a callous convenience, and in a letter to his chief

friend, Hobhouse, he said: "I must marry; you know I hate women, and for fear I should ever change that opinion, I shall marry." The expedition to Greece was probably undertaken to terminate his liaison with the Countess Guiccioli, of whose charms he was becoming tired. The lady was aware, it seems, of this, for only with great difficulty was she dissuaded from accompanying her lover, who complained of all kinds of obstacles thrown in his way by the "absurd womankind, who is determined on sacrificing herself in every way; if she makes a scene (and she has a turn that way) we shall have another romance, and a tale of ill-usage, and abandonment, and Lady Crolining and Lady Byroning." In a letter (to Kinnaid) Byron made the remarkable assertion that: "There never was a man who gave up so much for women, and all I have gained by it has been the character of treating them harshly."

It is strange that much of Byron's exquisite poetry was composed amid the demoralizing conditions incidental to his Venetian menage, and from some strange perversity he also wrote indecent stuff which was quite unfit for publication.

We know that many other admired poets wrote much that was offensive, among them Suckling, Herrick and Swift; but the greatest have rarely been sullied by this taint. Chaucer's occasional grossness was essential to the portrayal of some of the characters who took part in the motley calvacade of the famous Pilgrimage, and Shakespeare usually veiled discreetly a plaisanterie, as, for instance, where Malvolio reads the letter fabricated by the "youngest wren of mine."

Freethinkers may be reminded of a later-day poet, whose ashes were in our time refused a resting-place in Westminster Abbey.

George Meredith's religious views were not in accord with ecclesiastical standards; the clerical mind is ever intolerant of criticism and the Church never forgave the poet's indictment of its methods—"Parsondom has always been against progress; they treat Christianity, not as a religion, but as an institution."

EDGAR SYERS

## Letters to A Christian Friend

### (9) PSYCHOLOGY AND THE CADARENE SWINE

MY DEAR CHARLES,

What did Christ mean when he said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." (Matt. v. 17-18)? In Luke it is recorded that he said, "The Law and the Prophets were until John: since that time the Kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the Law to fail." (xvi. 16-17).

Personally I do not care a tinker's cuss what he meant, but Christians in the past have been simple and honest enough to believe that he meant what he said: that he had come to fulfil in person the prophecies and figures, and to perfect all that was imperfect in the Law, which otherwise was to be fulfilled as it stood.

That Law contained many abominable things, which these good Christians naturally put into operation with religious zeal, hoping thereby to win a crown of everlasting life from the God who commands, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." (Ex. xxii. 18), from the God who not only sanctions slavery



but gives explicit instructions to his people how to buy and make slaves to "be your bondmen for ever" (Lev. xxv. 44 ff.), and how to bore a hole through a Hebrew "servant's" ear as a sign of perpetual slavery if he does not wish to go free after his six years' servitude because it would mean leaving his wife and children as slaves (Ex. xxi. 1-6). Nor has Jesus any abrogation of these sanctions of slavery which are part of the Law. "Archdeacon Paley, special pleader as he is, is forced to admit that 'there is no passage in the Christian Scriptures by which it (slavery) is condemned or prohibited,'" says Chapman Cohen in his book, *Christianity, Slavery and Labour* (an admirable study of the subject, which I can lend you any time you care to read it).

You will be aware of at least some of the terrible cruelty, bloodshed and inhumanity of the Negro slave trade which was so long engaged in and supported by, and its abolition opposed by Christian Church leaders, busily quoting texts from the Old Testament Law against which there were no sayings of Jesus to give them their denial. (What on earth did it matter about such things as men's liberty? A slave could seek the more vital "spiritual life" as easily as a free man—perhaps better. "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you and persecute you . . . rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.")

Again you will be aware of some at least of the terrible cruelty and bloodshed inflicted on thousands of innocent men, women and children during the Christian Ages by good Christians conscientiously carrying out God's law, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." Nowhere does Jesus abrogate this law either; indeed, he encourages it by his demonstrations of his belief that people are running about possessed by devils, which he by his superior power can order to go elsewhere. In the noted case of the Gadarene swine Jesus commands the "devils" out of two madmen to take possession of a herd of swine, which then rush down a slope and drown the "devils"—and themselves—in the sea (Matt. viii. 28-34). Nor must we forget the sufferings, degradations and deaths inflicted on the mentally defective while people still believed in this stupid idea of demoniac possession—which Jesus upheld and taught.

Now, some modernist "re-interpreters" say that Jesus was not such a simple fellow as you might think, and that he was really a very clever psychologist (the Rev. Leslie Weatherhead calls him the "first religious psychologist," or some such pic-boo phrase). So, they say, Jesus himself didn't *really* believe in this business of possession by devils, but he cleverly *pretended* to, because the victims themselves believed in it, and that was the best way of curing them. But if there weren't really any devils at all, I wonder how Jesus managed to deceive the poor Gadarene swine!

After the bit about all the Law being fulfilled, Jesus continues:—

Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments (presumably of the Law), and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That *except* your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes (doctors of the law of Moses) and Pharisees (precise observers of the law), ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matt. v. 19-20).

Ye have heard that it was said by (or to) them of old time, Thou shalt not kill (Ex. xx. 13); and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment (the lesser tribunal of the Jews). But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment (some authorities omit, "without a cause"); and

whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca! (worthless fellow) shall be in danger of the council (Sanhedrim, the Jews' high court): but whosoever shall say, Thou fool! (or Moreh!) shall be in danger of hell-fire. (Then Jesus was in danger of hell fire a number of times!)

Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

Agree with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing (verses 21-26; see also Luke xii. 58-59).

Ye have heard that it was said by (or to) them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery (Ex. xx. 14). But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. (And to think of the number of "heart-felt" adulteries there must be among these outwardly faithful Christians!)

And if thy right eye offend thee (or, cause thee to offend, Revised Version; or, scandalize thee, Douay Version) pluck it out and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. (I don't know about you, Charles, but when I "look on a woman to lust after her," I usually do it not with just the right eye or the left, but with both! A good job for me that I am not a conscientious Christian or I might indeed be "blinded by my faith"!)

And if thy right hand offend thee (or, cause thee to offend), cut it off and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. (Matt. v. 27-30, see also Mark ix. 43-48, where the horrors of hell are more lasciviously painted in Jesus's glowing words.)

Well, Charles, there is little of a social nature here. The Christian must be more "righteous" than other men to get into the sacred Christian circle—he (or she) must have "that little something extra that others haven't got." He must, if he wishes to avoid punishment, curb his temper and his tongue (in which case he had better not take Jesus as his example!); he must, if he wishes to reap his due reward, make his ceremonial religious sacrifices with a clean and purified mind; and he must remember that an unworthy thought makes him to that degree a sinner just as much as an unworthy deed, and remains unworthy even if virtuously resisted and not carried into action. As regards imprisonment for unspecified offences, Jesus employs the usual heavy stick, and—seemingly without any regard for the merits of the case—threatens us with the alternative of saving our own skins by "settling out of court" and agreeing with our adversary, or having to pay the "uttermost farthing" (no question of justice here, and apparently not even remission of time for good conduct in gaol!)

Previously we had the examples of Christian conduct in witch-hunts and the Negro slave trade. You may object that Jesus cannot be blamed for these because he did not teach men to do such things, but neither did he specifically teach men *not* to do them, although specific sanctions for both of them were part of the sacred law which he "re-consecrated" and said would be fulfilled.

The belief in witchcraft is obviously a product entirely of religion and its primitive origins; and though men might have established and conducted the Negro slave trade without the help of the Bible, they would not have been able to do it with such nauseating religious gusto or such smarmy Sunday-school consciences. Nor would the weight of humanitarian opinion



for the abolition of slavery have been so long resisted.

So you see what harm results from regarding any of these old documents and superstitions as "sacred" or as the "word of God." There is only one test—human need and social utility. And that is the last test that a "sacred" book is put to; it is the last test to which a "sacred" priesthood that depends upon such a book can, or dare, submit it.

Best wishes to all. Affectionately,

R. H. S. STANDFAST

## A Christian Glossary

PENDING the compilation of a complete dictionary of Christian terms, a work which, most scholars are agreed, would require several centuries of research, a correspondent suggests that a glossary would be a practical proposition for issue in the near future. Meanwhile he is preparing the ground for the Committee of Translators which would have to be formed, and submits some examples of form the new work should assume.

*Absolution.*—A promissory-note on a mythical cloud-land, given by priests in exchange for spot-cash on earth.

*Aisle.*—Ecclesiastical territory entirely surrounded by the *See*.

*Altar.*—The Christians' snack-bar.

*Baptism.*—Incantation to a ghost through water.

*Bible.*—A collection of writings inspired by profits.

*Bishop.*—One of an order supported by crooks; a male disguised in frock and apron.

*Blasphemy.*—An imaginary libel or slander against an equally imaginary "complainant."

*Blood.*—Liquid in which Christians perform their abolutions.

*Christ.*—An expletive.

*Christian.*—A blood-bather.

*Church.*—God's House: an edifice tenanted by people who escape payment of rent because the whereabouts of the landlord of the premises are unknown.

*Charity.*—A human virtue transformed by religion into a flourishing trade.

*Communion.*—The standard diet of Christians.

*Cardinal.*—A priest who has won a "cap" in the international game of Spoof.

*Death.*—The Christian's bane and the Pagan's boon.

*Eden.*—An ancient Nudist Camp, broken up by the land-owner having let loose a talking snake before his creation of a talking mongoose.

*Faith.*—An unintelligible religious belief in the intangible and inexplicable.

*God.*—A jack-in-the-box or joss-in-the-ark invented to frighten babes and ignorant peoples.

*Heaven.*—A super-Plutocratic residential area, with palaces approached through pearly gates over golden floors. A term of the eccentric ground-landlord's lease of these palaces is that the occupants make ceaseless broadcast on harps and instruments of ten strings, interspersed with vocal selections.

*Pope.*—A "father" who rejects paternity.

D.

## Correspondence

### GIVE THEM A CHANCE

#### TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—Upholding the name of your paper the *Freethinker*, much interest attached to the letter of R. B. Kerr (March 19, 1939) and his reference to the book *Volk ohne Raum* (A people without Room).

There is plenty of room in the British Empire Commonwealth of Nations for the peoples of Germany, they are always welcome, and we have yet to hear from those who have left Germany disappointed in their lot within the British Empire. They are to be found everywhere.

Germans are regarded as far more intelligent and methodical than the thousands of Italians coming to Australia yearly, and this is not to be wondered at, when we read of the public complaint made by Giarlanti, Chairman of the Fascist Publishers' Federation, who says, *Moscow News*, March 6: "Italy is a country that reads very little. Only one out of 1,600 is interested in reading"; which may not be the fault of the individual Italian.

Hitler is unfair to the peoples of Germany in that he prevents their migrating by withholding their life savings if they do. No room is "all tosh." Let Hitler give them a chance.

Australia

AUSSIE

## IN MEMORIAM

In treasured memory of

VALERIE BRADLAUGH TRASK

November 17, 1934—May 18, 1935

## 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

#### INDOOR

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.30, W. B. Curry, M.A., B.Sc.—"Union Now."

#### OUTDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 6.30, Mrs. R. Grout.

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place): 7.30, A Lecture.

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

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 6.30, Mr. L. Ebury. Rushcroft Road, opposite Brixton Town Hall, 8.0, Tuesday, Mr. L. Ebury. Undine Street, Tooting, 8.0, Friday, Mr. F. A. Ridley.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 7.30, Wednesday, Mrs. Buxton and Mr. Carpenter. Thursday, 7.30, Mr. Saphin. Friday, 7.30, Mr. Barnes. Sunday, 3.30, Messrs. Bryant, Barnes and Collins. Sunday, 7.30, Messrs. Bryant, Barnes, Tuson, Wood and Mrs. Buxton.

### COUNTRY

#### INDOOR

TEES SIDE BRANCH N.S.S. (Jubilee Hall, Leeds Street): 7.15, A Lecture.

#### OUTDOOR

BIGG MARKET: 8.0, Friday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

BIRKENHEAD BRANCH N.S.S. (Haymarket): 8.0, Saturday, Mr. J. V. Shortt. Well Lane Corner, 8.0, Wednesday, Mr. D. Robinson.

BURNLEY MARKET: 7.0, Sunday, Mr. J. Clayton.

COLNE: 7.30, Wednesday, Mr. J. Clayton.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Mound): 7.0, Mr. Frank Smithies—"God in the Bargain Basement."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Albert Road): 8.0, Friday, Muriel Whitefield. Albion Street, 7.30, Sunday, Mr. T. L. Smith. Milngavie Tram Terminus, 11.30, Sunday. Rambling Club meet.

HAPTON: 7.30, Tuesday, Mr. J. Clayton.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Queen's Drive, Walton, opp. Baths): 8.0, Sunday, Monday and Friday. Edge Hill Lamp, 8.0, Tuesday. High Park Street, corner of Park Road, 8.0, Wednesday and Thursday. Mr. G. Whitehead will speak at these meetings.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Eccles Market): 8.0, Friday, Bury Street, 8.0, Saturday. Ashton Market, 8.0, Sunday. Mr. W. A. Atkinson will speak at these meetings. Stevenson Square, 7.0, Sunday, Messrs. G. H. Taylor, S. Newton and C. McCall, Junr.

STOCKTON (The Cross): 7.0, Sunday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

WHEATLEY LANE: 7.30, Friday, Mr. J. Clayton.



# PAMPHLETS FOR THE PEOPLE

## CHAPMAN COHEN

No. 13. Thou Shalt not Suffer a Witch to Live      No. 14. Freethought and the Child

- No. 1. Did Jesus Christ Exist?  
 2. Morality Without God  
 3. What is the Use of Prayer?  
 4. Christianity and Woman  
 5. Must We Have a Religion?  
 6. The Devil

- No. 7. What is Freethought?  
 8. Gods and Their Makers  
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