

# THE FREETHINKER

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## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### Russia and Religion

THE Archbishop of York went to Russia. It was a flying visit both as to his transport and the duration of his stay. On his return he was interviewed by representatives of the Press, a picture was drawn depicting the enthusiasm displayed by his brother Christians in Russia, the courtesy with which he was received by members of the Government, stress was laid on the crowds that went to the churches in which the Archbishop preached, etc. The first papers we saw suggested that there was a great revival of Christianity going on, more churches were being opened, in fact, there was a marked return to Christianity.

Based on some notices in the Sunday papers, we wrote a note in "The Freethinker" for October 17, which dealt with the Archbishop rather more severely than he deserved. But the real responsibility rests with the way in which the papers played up to the Churches. Still, it is only fair to say that had we seen the full report of what had been said, we should not have been so harsh with the Archbishop. On the other hand, we may place part of the blame on the Churches that for years carried on a crusade of misrepresentation about Russia, and so kept up the lies about the Soviet Union, lies which our Christian leaders have not had the decency publicly to withdraw.

The "Return of Christianity to Russia" appears to be based on the existence of crowded churches that welcomed the Archbishop and the statement that more churches had been opened. Neither statement offers much material for surprise. The surprising thing would have been if the reverse had happened. Russia is an immense country in both extent of area and population. And that the Atheism of the saviours of the new Russia would not represent the attitude of the majority of Russians would be taken for granted by intelligent people. The great mass of the Russian people were very ignorant, over 80 per cent. could neither read nor write, and large numbers of the villages—Russia was a country of villages—did not possess inhabitants that could read even a Government proclamation. The Church had done its best to keep the people in ignorance, and a people do not turn from crass superstition to Atheism at the word of command. Conversion from one religion to another is easy. It is no more than swapping absurdities, and conversions may mean either grosser superstition or a superstition that has its language expressed in daintier tone or form.

But fundamentally the transference to Atheism is an intellectual process. The process may be slow or rapid, but it is always a process, and a process simply cannot be instantaneous. Listen to any preacher of any religion, and one must be a very dull dog not to recognise that he is listening to a repetition of established formulas. A

man may never have the strength to break loose from traditional beliefs and attitudes, but let him once break loose and he cannot return to bondage. Even the Churches have pictured Satan as full of wisdom. It is the angels that spend eternity howling the inanity "Holy, Holy," and only a God would be capable of standing an eternally reverberating monotone. At any rate, Atheism does not thrive on mass conversions.

### What Has Happened

What then was it that the Archbishop said which led some papers, and particularly the religious ones, to shout that Russia was "receding from Atheism"? He said "There can be no doubt that worship within the churches is fully allowed." But freedom of religious worship has never been denied in Russia. As early as 1918 it was decreed (Article 3): "Every citizen may adhere to any religion or adhere to none. Any limitations relating to adherence to any kind of faith or non-adherence to any faith are abolished." And Article 5 says: "Free practice of religious customs is safeguarded in so far as it does not disturb the public peace and does not infringe upon the rights of citizens of the Soviet Republic." And Article 9: "The school is separated from the Church. . . . The citizen may teach religion or be taught religion in a private capacity."

It does seem, however, that the Archbishop had not yet outgrown the torrent of lies and misrepresentations that followed the accession of the present rulers to power, because he notes that "there are a large number of churches used for secular purposes and the number of those used for worship gradually increases." But this is in complete accordance with the original policy of the Soviets. In this country we maintain a large number of churches, far greater than church attendance would justify. The Soviet plan was to regulate the number of churches by the number of worshippers, and if in any locality a certain number asked for a Church, it would be given them. But the Churches were not to be used as centres of propaganda. No one who understands the position in which the Russian Government stood in the early part of its existence, when by methods, honest and dishonest, the endeavour was made to bring the Soviets to the ground, an endeavour in which our Churches did not stand idly by, could consider the rule made inadvisable. In this country the weaker religion becomes, the harder the Government works to provide artificial props at the nation's expense—as in the existing attempt to restore to the Churches the power they once had over education.

The Archbishop says: "There are millions of Russians who are turning to God for guidance." So did millions of Russians under Czardom, but it is certain that the statement could not be made on his own experience. He was repeating only what the heads of the Church felt it profitable

to say, and no man in his senses would blindly accept a communication from such a source. The statement that "there are large numbers who conscientiously reject all belief in God" is unquestionably characteristic of the majority of the younger generation. And when a man or woman becomes an Atheist—a real Atheist—they cannot retrace their steps.—As we have so often said, Atheism is a one-way road. A man may never tread it, but once he has done so he can never retrace his steps. We admit the statement that "millions of Russians are turning to God for guidance." For once we think we have a British Christian leader who has underestimated the power of his creed. For I would say that probably two-thirds of the inhabitants of Russia still believe in God, but if in the face of all obstacles 50 or 60 millions of Russians are hard and fast Atheists—and in a Russia that has done so much to uplift the whole of the people, and in the course of a single generation, without any use whatever for religion—the future may yet rate this as one of the wonders of our time. For remember, Atheism is not to be reached as an allegiance to a religious creed may be developed; by a rush of mere sensationalism. Atheism involves an intellectual process, not a burst of emotionalism.

But one cannot touch pitch without being defiled, and on another issue the Archbishop of York drops back to the religious level. He says:—

"Premier Stalin is a wise statesman, who recognises that religion is inherent in the majority of the Russian people: he has had to take from them in the national cause much that they value, but he feels that he can give them something in making it plain that there is no hindrance to their worship."

I do not know what is meant by religion being "inherent in the Russian people"; it is just one of those foolish phrases that many others beside the Archbishop are in the habit of using. The Russians have no more an "inherent" tendency to religion than they have an inherent longing for vodka. This again is a catchy phrase that politicians and parsons are fond of, perhaps for the reason that it demands neither careful thinking nor scientific knowledge either to say or to accept. Often it is the cry of the rogue to the simple.

The real reason for the Soviet Government taking the measures it did with regard to religion is actually given by the Archbishop when he says: "The Church is no longer the supporter of the old system." That says more than the Archbishop realises. The Church and the worst features of Czarism went hand-in-hand. The Church enslaved the mind of the immense majority of the Russian people in the interests of Czardom. Czardom repaid religion in kind by restricting education, subsidising a drunken clergy and a barbarous superstition. The Soviet found itself faced with a peasantry that formed the larger part of the inhabitants of Russia, but which were unbelievably ignorant, subject to yearly famines, living like cattle, and dominated by a religious system that acted as the "spiritual" bodyguard of privilege and tyranny. Professor E. J. Dillon, writing from his own personal experience, draws the following picture of the peasantry of Russia. They were, he says:—

"A good-natured, lying, thieving, patient, ignorant mass, whom one is at all times tempted to connect in

the same isocultural line with the Weddas of India, or the Bangals of the upper Congo, and who differ from West Europeans much as Sir Thomas Browne's 'vegetating creature of mere existence' differs from the 'things of life.' For most of them, indeed, life, dwarfed to its narrowest conceivable limits, is void of meaning."

It is this mass of humans, devoid of real life, which the Soviets took in hand, and for good or ill, transformed a people whom, at least for the time being, the world cannot too highly praise. And it is only when we understand the part played by the Russian Church in denying to these huge masses of men and women the possibilities of at least a comparatively decent life, and it is when we can afford to remember the work of the Churches in this country in poisoning the mind of our own people with regard to what had taken place in Russia, that we begin to realise that if the overwhelming mass of the Russian people were to awaken to life the power the Church had crushed, we should also take at its proper value the campaign of lying that had its run in this country, in which the English Churches played so great a part. In the new Russia the Churches have no place in the schools of the nation, but so far as religious worship is concerned, the State, as the Archbishop points out, is neutral, and allows equal treatment to all denominations outside the Orthodox Church.

Asked whether there were any *young* priests in Russia, the Archbishop merely replied that he understood "some of the most active are with the army"—but not, it may be added, as priests. They are doing their duty as soldiers and men. Modern Russia would not insult its soldiers by saying, as we do to the world, that our soldiers are not able properly to do their duty and retain their manhood without having travelling "padres." One day, perhaps, that implied insult to the British soldier will be lifted.

Finally, if one wishes to decide whether the Russia which gives no official recognition of religion, which insists that every child born in that huge land shall stand equal with regard to the opportunities for education, limited only by natural inability to master the higher phases, is inferior or superior to the Russia it supplanted, the facts lie before him. No country in the world has so transformed a nation for the better in a single generation. It has made vocal and justifiable a love for their native land which the Russians, in a less intelligent manner, always had. The new Russia has shown itself capable of grappling with social problems that affect the whole civilised world, and not only grapple with them, but has taken many steps towards solving them. Above all, it has given the direct lie to the cry of vested interests in our own country that "You cannot alter human nature." The Russians have altered it. They have proved what every student of human development should know, that human nature is one of the most pliable of living materials. To have buried a social order that covered one-sixth of the earth, and to have established in its place a new and a better one is something that ought to serve as a spur to a more rapid development of our own land.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## LYING FOR THE LORD!

LYING is a genetical characteristic of Christianity, an ineradicable trait; and despite the differences which mark off the two main types of Christianity—Roman and Protestant—there remains in each a forceful survival of that characteristic of lying and cheating which was so predominant a feature of the original stock from which both have sprung.

These are not days for velvet-glove methods of controversy. Under our very noses the clericals of this country are plotting and scheming and acting to rob our education system of the little democracy and freedom which it has painfully gained since 1870. They are working to restore to themselves their past power and prestige; they are endeavouring to shape to their totalitarian ideology the as-yet-undeveloped machinery of political democracy, ere that machinery becomes a real instrument for the expression of the will of the people.

Under the cloak of intellectual darkness that temporarily shrouds the travail of a suffering world, they are trying to buy out from the politicians a most precious and hard-won right of the people—the right to enjoy the benefits of education free from the poison of a sectarian creed that stimulates hatred among people which they must learn to be citizens of their common homeland!

But I must not wander back again into the schools question, as such. The purpose here is to illustrate the inherent capacity and practical ability of the Christian Church to lie like hell for the benefit of the Lord, and to the detriment of the people. The velvet gloves, I repeat, must come off.

Indeed, our enemies have already taken off their gloves, and their primitive claws are revealed; they have also dropped their masks, metaphorically exposing the beastly, uncivilised and uncultured features that preface the truly religious mind—a mind that is developed and nurtured in the obsolete mental muck that rightly belongs to an age when men knew no better than to wallow in it.

Their masks have dropped, their gloves are off in a fight for survival; they have opened their mouths to speak to the people they live on, and they have proved themselves to be blatant and deliberate liars, impudent and unashamed, and uninfluenced by any of the moral qualities which they falsely claim to represent.

In connection with the Church schools controversy, which is greatly exciting "official" Catholic indignation, though it seems to leave lay Catholics somewhat cool and indifferent, there is being repeated with emphasis and regularity that most damnable lie, that "Catholics pay twice over for their education." I am at the moment concerned with the fact that Catholics ought to be in such a position, so long as they maintain their ignorant and offensive attitude to national education; I am now concerned with the lie that is being told in the effort to feather Christian nests still further at the public expense. This deliberate and calculated lie is not being told by innuendo, but is actually being proclaimed in the simplest and plainest terms from the platform and in the press.

"Nine-tenths of the people of the country do not know that Catholics pay twice over for their education," runs a statement in the "Catholic Herald." The same barefaced lie is repeated by the Rev. E. B. A. Somerset, in a letter to the "Yorkshire Post," this time concerning Anglicans.

Is the "Catholic Herald" unaware, when it allows such a statement to be published, that under the Balfour Act the whole cost of maintaining Church schools falls upon the rates—teachers' salaries, equipment, lighting, heating, and so on, and that the repairs to these schools, arising from their use as public elementary schools, are borne by the rates? Is the Rev. E. B. A. Somerset unaware of this; are the scores of Church propagandists who are making similar statements unaware of these facts? Indeed they are not.

Then the whole thing must be a deliberate and impudent lie, and a lie that, for its success, must depend upon the general ignorance of people in these matters, including their own followers, for even the inveterate liar refrains from telling a lie than can instantly be recognised.

Space allows only one more example, out of many, of this fraudulent policy, designed to fool the public into paying still more for something they do not want. The same Rev. Somerset, in the same letter to the "Yorkshire Post," says that not 1 per cent. of the people could say correctly what is the difference between a Church school and a State school. Perhaps he is right in that. But he then goes on to "explain" the difference in a most misleading fashion, suggesting that it is merely a matter of control.

All I can say to this is, Mr. Somerset should ask a Catholic priest if the only difference is one of control! Poor Mr. Somerset might really think it is, however, and in case he does I refer him to his own Anglican National Society, whose full title and object is, "The National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church."

A rare mouthful, that—and a "bibful," Mr. Somerset! But to revert to the "twice over" lie—the fact is that people are being taken in by this statement. Not only is it untrue, but it is not even one of those religious half-truths, for in actual practice the policy of full maintenance and repairs at State or ratepayers' expense provides nearly the whole cost of Church schools to-day. But to get the little more that would make it 100 per cent., they are prepared to lie in the best Christian fashion—bold and brass-faced—and to use false pretences to persuade the public cow to yield up the last drop of milk.

What can we do about it? Action is necessary if the greedy, grasping clericals, these men of God, are to be prevented from further subsidising their superstitions at the expense of the public, and on the strength of a lie.

The obvious answer is, the lie having been told, it must be refuted. Secularists, and all who object to the intrusion of the black militia into education, all who honour truth as being of social value, must bestir themselves into greater activity. The same kind of energy that is used to state the lie must be used to refute it. We must be prepared at all times, in all appropriate circumstances, to state the true position clearly and concisely, so that Mr. Somerset's 99 per cent., and the "Catholic Herald's" nine-tenths, of ignoramuses, will know exactly how much they are already paying for a religion they no longer want.

And as we nail the lie itself, let us expose the liar as well, by showing that the Great Lying Church is running true to type.

F. J. CORINA.

## POETS AND THE B.B.C.

Every man wishes to be wise; and they who cannot be wise are almost always cunning.—Dr. JOHNSON.

OF all the nefarious usages of the B.B.C., perhaps its most insidious is that it sucks into its insatiable maw many of the best minds of our day and trims them assiduously down to suit its own commonplace and timorous ends. It is little enough that it will not allow on the lawless wind a single syllable from an honest infidel, lest it disturb the neurotic prejudices of cowardly men and cowardly women who, abject and arrogant, wrap themselves about in their obstinate fantasies until they can neither breathe pure air or allow others to do so.

Truth will in time find its own level. It may be trampled upon, gagged, kept behind iron bolts, but sooner or later it escapes. "Flout 'em and scout 'em thought is free!" The most subtle, the most pernicious, the most fatal effect of the B.B.C. is that it gradually corrupts, dilutes, or undermines the taste and integrity of exceptional men of talent. Do the poets,

philosophers and men-of-letters who associate themselves with this powerful Corporation truly deceive themselves into believing that they are elevating the taste of the public? Does Mr. Louis MacNeice, and do other poets, really care for the semi-true, wholly false representations of famous men to which they attach their names, with their intrusions of irrelevant music flung in like cannon shot to stun the ear and overturn the brain?

Fortunate it is for the subjects of these clumsy travesties that they died before the invention of this pervasive, nimble and ensourecised instrument which has conquered every hazard of close pursuit, and can now track a man from door to door, over ditch, stile and garden wall into his last ambush, his own private bedchamber. It has become, indeed, the world's swiftest and cleverest sleuth. Flaubert once said that the important thing for an artist was to maintain himself in a lofty atmosphere far from the bourgeois and democratic mud and mire. But now the mud and mire come splashing into every household, and there is no longer any means of escape.

Every village the country over is losing its distinctive charm and character because of this ingenious toy, which twangs out in cottage and manor house alike its endless repertoire of sophisticated vulgarities, maudlin sentiment, pseudo-culture and poisonous propaganda that kills true judgment and corrodes the engines of all original and independent thought. If anyone has any doubt on this matter, let him read a book by the distinguished French writer, George Duhamel, entitled "Defence of Letters." M. Duhamel foresees the time when people will cease altogether to read books, and will turn entirely to the radio for their culture and instruction. He even goes so far as gloomily to predict the complete disappearance of the classics, except as they are conserved to be occasionally transmitted in selected passages over the air.

Inquire of any good musician—and it would be wise to choose one who is in no way connected with the B.B.C.—whether the radio is not educating children to prefer music slightly off pitch that reaches them in a mechanical manner to that heard in the concert hall, just as tinned products come in time to be preferred to fresh ones. How many charming and defenceless men and women in every class of life, does it not almost drive out of their senses, with its shrill brass bands, its whining jazz and its pent-up, maniacal shrieks of terrifying, inane laughter! And yet nine-tenths of the people who keep it blaring and hissing, whistling and booming, volleying and jigging from 7 a.m. until the last suave, bored announcer turns off the last switch at well past midnight, merely like some indiscriminate noise at their elbows while they do their work, or yawn and stretch their legs, or apply their mischievous wits to some futile jig-saw puzzle.

Must we others spend the rest of our days with ear plugs in our ears (Arnold Bennett never set foot from his door without them, inadequate at that); or must we bludgeon into submission, were it possible to do so, the most princely inheritance of all our proud animal ancestry? How may we account for the fact that men of such outstanding gifts as Mr. E. Sackville-West, for example, with his fastidious literary taste, and his sensitive, musical ear, can let his name be associated with such an organisation as the B.B.C.? I suspect, however, that Mr. Sackville-West has never himself listened to a programme of the B.B.C., but has some sound-proof sanctuary (cork-lined like that of Proust's) to which he retreats, there to enjoy his undisturbed reveries.

Make no doubt of it, these poets, these scientists, these philosophers who bend their talents to suit their masters are selling themselves, not to Satan—there would be some honour in such a bargain, especially if he were anything like Milton's Satan, whom Blake assures us was Milton himself—but to a mediocre, timid, equivocating, banal monster that uses them for its own cunning purposes, clips their free wings, and sends them

off with coins clinking in their pockets, and their mortal souls in jeopardy.

"Poverty has its freedom, luxury its restraint." For does any man of taste pretend for a second that the programmes of the B.B.C. promote true culture, of which it has not the faintest conception? True culture is turned inward, not outward; it is secret, impassioned and shy. It is nurtured in solitude and silent reflection, and the very thought of a B.B.C. transmitting disc would be enough to send it scurrying as instantly and as fleetly away as a hare with the harriers at her heels. Let these "artists" who are associated with the B.B.C. ask themselves if there is a single great man on whose writings they have been nourished who would not have been revolted by the programmes presented for the purpose of bringing "culture" to the masses.

What would Rabelais, Villon, Swift, Walt Whitman, Abraham Lincoln, Wordsworth, Lamb, Coleridge, Tolstoy and, above all, Cowper have said could they have heard the burlesques enacted in their names; not even burlesques, but insipid hotch-pots of gossipy conversations, tricky music and tragedy made palatable and sprightly for a giddy, languid and callous multitude. And yet what eminent man does not feel gratified at the thought of his voice echoing over the spaces and reaching into the ears of—how many millions of listeners?

Even Mr. Max Beerbohm has yielded to the temptation, and Mr. E. M. Forster has not hesitated to recommend to young men and young women agape for his final word on such important matters, the works of Ernest Hemingway as of outstanding distinction. I do not think Mr. Osbert Sitwell's voice has yet been heard over the air, but I fear in the end this most mettlesome and independent man-of-letters will tumble in like all the others, for it is a disease most contagious.

Coleridge once wrote: "Great minds can and do create the taste of the age, and one of the contingent causes which warp the taste of nations and ages is, that men of genius in part yield to it, and in part are acted on by the taste of the age." These words may well illustrate the danger to men-of-letters of being employed by an organisation which is constantly seeking to rife and tame their brains for its own self-interested motives. "There is no culture possible where fear of consequences is a stronger principle than love of truth," wrote another great Englishman. But what interest has the B.B.C. either in culture or in truth?

If artists, writers, philosophers and scientists would refuse to speak a single word, or work a single hour for an organisation that laid down a single rule as to what they should or should not say, there would be some hope of making an impression on those poor-spirited Christian gentlemen, whose contemptible evasion of the simple logic so continually called to their attention by free men and free women the whole country over, has been for long a recognised scandal.

Our young men, our homes, our ancient monuments, our desperately won liberties—all are menaced; and now the very thoughts of our most gifted thinkers must be commandeered and dexterously manipulated before being finally presented in a form acceptable to a congeries of tight-lipped, Philistine, feather-headed, lily-hearted, half-educated Church members and a vast, indiscriminate mob, whose memories are as short as their minds are vacant. And it is our poets, who, in their docile compliance with the rules laid down for them, join with our final betrayers and become both the traducers and the traduced.

ALYSE GREGORY.

What is conscience? If man were incapable of suffering, if man could not feel pain, the word "conscience" would never have passed his lips. The man who puts himself in the place of another, whose imagination has been cultivated to the point of feeling the agonies suffered by another, is the man of conscience.

—INGERSOLL.

## THE ARYAN MYTH

ONE particular and very unfortunate ascription of one science to another, is the myth of the existence of an "Aryan race," the repercussions of which have been so intense that we must discuss it separately.

Despite the fact that England had had commitments in India from the beginning of the 17th century, there was no interest in the language of that sub-continent until the end of the 18th century. In the year 1783 the eminent Oriental scholar, Sir William Jones (1746-1794), landed in India as Judge of the High Court of Calcutta. He began at once to study the Indian language. During the remaining ten years of his life he demonstrated the relationship of the Sanskrit to the main vernaculars of Europe.

It was Sir William Jones who introduced the word Aryan into modern European literature. He used it in a translation from Sanskrit in a perfectly correct and purely linguistic sense, to denote the speakers of certain Indian languages from others. Later it was used to denote the speakers of the Aryan or Indo-European family of languages or sometimes to denote the languages themselves. It is of Sanskrit origin, occurs also in Zend, and passed thence into modern Indian dialects. It was used by the Greeks and Romans (Latin *Ariana*, modern *Iran*) as a description of Eastern Persia, the district now called Afghanistan. *Arya* has also been used, as Sir William Jones well knew, as a religious group-name to distinguish the worshippers of gods of the Brahmans from the worshippers of other Indian deities.

During the first half of the 19th century the work begun by Sir William Jones was carried on by European philologists, especially in Germany. It came to be realised that there was a concrete group of languages which had very distinctive common factors and included Sanskrit, Zend, Singalese, Pehlevi, Pali, Armenian, Persian, Greek, Latin, as well as the Celtic, Teutonic, Slavonic and other groups. Hittite has recently been shown to be of the group. The greater number of these languages is or was spoken in Asia. They came to be described as "Aryan," though they were also called "Indo-European," "Indo-Germanic," and sometimes—following a Biblical theory—"Japhetic." There was, however, always a tendency among philologists to restrict the use of the word Aryan to the Asiatic portion of this group of languages. This restriction rested on the firm ground that only the ancient Indian and Persian speakers of this family of languages called themselves *Arya*.

It happened that the beginning of the 19th century the Romantic school in Germany became attracted to the study of the Indian languages. This was largely the result of the efforts of the poet Friedrich von Schlegel (1772-1829), who with his equally romantic wife, the daughter of the Jewish philosopher, Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786) became deeply impressed by Sir William Jones' translations from the Sanskrit. . . . From Schlegel's time to the present, the study of the Indian languages and their relation to the European has been pursued with more zeal than in any other country. We are not concerned with the general course of those investigations, but there is one incident which is specially important. . . .

In the early years of the reign of Queen Victoria the Prussian Minister to Britain was Baron William Carl Josias Bunsen (1791-1860), whose grandson was British Ambassador to Vienna at the outbreak of the Great War. Baron Bunsen was a considerable scholar, overflowing with enthusiasm for German philology. In 1847 he read a paper to the British Association at Oxford, in which he sought to show that the whole of mankind could be classified according to language and that this was a valuable anthropological guide.

About this time there came to England, under Bunsen's patronage, the young German scholar Friedrich Max Müller (1823-1900), who settled in Oxford in 1848 and remained there for the rest of his life. The high character and great literary and philological gifts of Max Müller are well known. About 1853 he introduced into current usage the unlucky term *Aryan*, as applied to a large group of languages. His use of this Sanskrit word contains in itself two assumptions—one linguistic, that the Indo-Persian sub-group of language is older or more primitive than any of its relatives; the other geographical, that the cradle of the common ancestor of these languages was the Ariana of the ancients, in Central Asia. Of these the first is known to be certainly erroneous, and the second is at least very doubtful. . . .

Moreover, Max Müller threw another apple of discord. He introduced a demonstration which is demonstrably false. He spoke not only of a definite Aryan language and its descendants, but also of a corresponding "Aryan race." The idea was rapidly taken up both in England and Germany. It affected to some extent a certain number of the nationalist historical and romantic writers, none of whom had any ethnological training. It was given especial currency by the French author Gobineau. . . .

In England and America the phrase "Aryan race" has ceased to be used by writers with scientific knowledge, though it appears in political and propagandist literature. . . . Max Müller was later convinced by scientific friends of the enormity of his error, and did his very best to make amends.

Thus, in 1888, he wrote: "Aryans are those who speak Aryan languages, whatever their colour, whatever their blood. In calling them Aryan we predicate nothing of them except that the grammar of their language is Aryan." "I have declared again and again that if I say Aryans, I mean neither blood nor bones, nor hair, nor skull; I mean simply those who speak an Aryan language. When I speak of them I commit myself to no anatomical characteristics. The blue-eyed and fair-haired Scandinavians may have been conquerors or conquered. They may have adopted the language of their darker lords, or vice versa. . . . To me an ethnologist who speaks of Aryan race, Aryan blood, Aryan eyes and hair, is as great a sinner as a linguist who speaks of a dolichocephalic dictionary or a brachycephalic grammar. . . ."

Max Müller frequently repeated his protest, but alas! in vain. "The evil that men do lives after them, the good is oft interred with their bones." Who does not wish to have had noble ancestors? The belief in an "Aryan race" had become accepted by philologists who knew nothing of ethnology—and even by a few ethnologists who had no technical training and no clear idea of the biological meaning to be attached to the word "race." The influence of the idea of an "Aryan race" vitiates the work of a small band of anthropologists to this very day. If the term Aryan is given a racial meaning at all, it should be applied to that ethnic unit, whatever it was, that first spoke a language distinguished as Aryan. Of the character of that hypothetical unit it is simple truth to say that we know nothing whatever. As regards locality, the balance of evidence appears to suggest somewhere in the region of the Caucasus.

("We Europeans" (1935), by JULIAN HUXLEY,  
A. C. HADDON and A. M. CARR-SAUNDERS.)

The Bible is responsible for the cruel slaughter of millions of alleged witches. It is also responsible for the prolonged treatment of lunatics as possessed. The methods of science are now adopted in civilised countries. Hysterical women are no longer tortured as witches. Lunatics are no longer chained and beaten as persons inhabited by devils. Kindness and common sense have taken the place of cruelty and superstition. And this change was brought about, not through the Bible, but in spite of it.—G. W. FOOTE, "The Book of God."

## ACID DROPS

WHEN peace comes we can, we feel sure, find a very strong section of British society that will do its best to see that at most our relations with Russia are not too close. To this party the Church will contribute its share. As an illustration the following, from a little pamphlet by Bishop A. D. Thompson, printed at Felixstowe and issued by the "Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony" Society, is worth noting. Bishop Thompson says that God's call should keep a Christian nation from entering into alliance and cultural relations with ungodly nations. . . .

"When Germany treacherously attacked the Soviets there was every reason why the Allies should supply them with the maximum of arms possible. But there should be no intimate cultural relations until the Soviet leaders abandon their anti-God attitude, lest our friendship should spread the virus of infidelity in our midst."

We are quite sure there are plenty who will share Bishop Thompson's opinions, and when this war is over many who are now silent will become vocal, and those who are not vocal will be planning and plotting to do what they can to keep us from getting too intimate with "Godless Russia." We may take the Government's Education Bill as an instalment in advance.

The prospect of this war being one that is to end war is not as bright as it might be. The Poles appear to be working for a revival of that nationalism which regards surrounding nations as potential enemies. Churchill has already voiced the slogan "What we have we hold," and now a Dutch paper published in London, the "Vrij Nederland," is suggesting that, with Belgium, there should be formed a combined army functioning as one. Britain will, of course, have an independent army, navy and air force; Russia and the U.S.A. will also have their independent armed forces, maintained in readiness for the war which is never to happen again. The "never again" is apparently to apply to Japan and Germany only, and there will be just a kind of armed peace with the certainty that, given these conditions, war will again dominate everything else.

Even a beaten Germany may look forward to such a situation with hope for the future. A nation of sixty or seventy millions of people, with its military traditions, will remain a tempting bait whenever nations with distorted notions of "natural dignity" threaten arbitration by brute force. Large national armies have always been, and always will be, an incitement to war. There is but one guarantee of peace—until mankind is civilised enough to make human intercourse harmless, and that is an international force at the orders of an international court. But to talk about the creation of a world in which man can live free from the fear of armed assault, and where justice is supreme, while at the same time holding in reserve the right of any one nation to vindicate its claim by force, is almost criminal in its profound stupidity.

There has been trouble in the London Presbytery of the Church of Scotland. According to the "Aberdeen Press and Journal" of October 13, there are some who do not agree with the New Testament teaching that women are to keep silent in the Church, but the majority are satisfied. The Rev. Percival Mackenzie, of St. James's Church, Dulwich, says that the inclusion of women in the "eldership would be a serious stumbling block." He says that "the Apostolic advice is good enough for me," and rather than submit to women preaching he would sooner choose another career. Another elected by God says there was no majority call for women.

That is good, sound, historic Christian theology. As one of the early Christian leaders said, it was through woman that "even the Son of God had to die," and it would be an insult to God if she were now to be put upon the level of man. Of course, there is no Christian objection to women to do housework, knit the preachers' socks, and to collect money for their benefit, but to imagine that they should preach to man—out of the house—is quite against the New Testament. Even Jesus refrained from selecting women for his chief officials. The twelve disciples had not a woman amongst them—at least officially. They can do war-work and run canteens. What more do they want? Even the

Archbishops of Canterbury and York, who are brimming over with goodwill to mankind, draw the line at having women placed—religiously—on the level of Man.

Canon Rogers said recently that there is a common policy between the Church of England and the sister Churches which we often forget. But if these members of the Churches cannot work on a religious basis it would seem that union can only exist between them on a non-religious basis. And that assumption is in accord with fact. Nothing divides people so much as religion. It is in the weakening of religious belief that better chance exists of men working together to the common end of social sense. If Canon Rogers reflects he may feel surprised to discover what a radical truth he has stated, and the kind of lesson he is giving to others.

A Catholic organ is responsible for the explanation why the Pope has never excommunicated Fascists responsible for the brutality of their rule—that he must act according to Church law: that "Fascists may be good and loyal Catholics." We agree with that last statement. In fact, we have pointed out many times that the policy with which the Fascists sought to create and maintain their rule is on all fours with the policy of the Roman Church in securing the stability of its rule. It is really not easy to avoid telling the truth sometimes, as the above quotation proves.

People have often asked what part God plays in the war. For example, as the war will end one day, and we believe will end with the breakdown of Fascist methods—as practised by Italy and Germany—the question is why did not God act when war began? The answer given by the Rev. J. Bailie is that "God's purpose has been to humble our nation to the utmost, and by a long war, almost to the dust, if by that means it could be brought to see the peril of its ways." Now if that be true, we suggest in all seriousness that Mussolini and Hitler be indicted for allowing themselves to become the agents of God. We have never agreed that God did incite Mussolini and Hitler, but if Mr. Bailie is correct the responsibility for the war lies with Mussolini, Hitler, their aides—and God. And it will not end until we grovel before the heavenly throne.

Dr. Bell, Bishop of Chichester, says that a "service of immense value could be rendered if the greatest religions of the world, both Eastern and Western, Christian and non-Christian, could take counsel with each other in awakening in every nation a faith in God." But what is God doing? Surely the job is his if anybody's. It is remarkable that people should need so much hunting to get what our preachers tell us all men want and all men are looking for; and a Christian Bishop wishes to work with all sorts of other religions to get people to believe in God. It looks as though the situation is getting serious.

The Rev. Henry Wigley, of Derby, informs the world that "Russian Communism" cannot succeed permanently unless it finds a "spiritual basis" for it. Mebbe not. But it seems to be getting on very well.

The Archbishop of York says that he preached to 10,000 people at one of his services in Russia. We have private information the actual number was 13 less. Still, lest our Archbishop gets too stuck up about his audience, we may remind him that more than that number have been present at a football match—and each one paid to go in.

The "Daily Sketch" is quoted by the "Universe" as saying that the mass of British elementary schoolteachers are "anti-clerical." That is good news, and we wish they would make themselves and their opinions better known. But the "Universe" adds that the teachers are afraid of their ignorance being exposed when children ask questions, and they "hate the clergy accordingly." That seems a curious conclusion to make. If the "Daily Sketch" and the "Universe" will look into the matter and report accordingly, they will find that teachers dislike the clergy (privately) because they want to get on with their proper job, and not to be brought under clerical control.

# "THE FREETHINKER"

2 and 3, Furnival Street, Holborn,  
London, E.C.4.  
Telephone No.: Holborn 2601.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS

**OLD JACK.**—Many thanks. It will be useful and will go among our collection of such cases. Pleased to have you praise "The Freethinker."

**L. WILLIAMS.**—We have never blamed the clergy for getting all the State help and privileges they can get. We complain more of the foolish people who enable them to get it. We agree that if we were a Christian priest we should act as they do. But we are not, and that makes a tremendous difference in outlook—and decency.

The General Secretary, N.S.S., gratefully acknowledges a donation of 10s. from Mr. L. Sanderson to the General Fund of the Society.

All advance orders for "Christianity—What Is It?" have now been executed. Will any readers who have not received the book kindly advise us, for the edition is limited.

The author quoted in Mr. J. Phillips' recent article, "What Can You See In It?" is "Philo Ren," not "Philoken."

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2-3, Furnival Street, London, E.C.4, and not to the Editor.

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

The FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, 17s.; half-year, 8s. 6d.; three months, 4s. 4d.

Lecture notices must reach 2 and 3, Furnival Street, Holborn, London, E.C.4, by the first post on Monday, or they will not be inserted.

## SUGAR PLUMS

We are pleased to record that the Editor's new essay, "Christianity, What Is It?" is selling remarkably well. It looks like being one of our best sellers. It would be a good book to hand on to liberal-minded Christian friends, and even to illiberal ones a reading of it could hardly fail to arouse a feeling that all is not well on the Christian front.

We have noted before the excellent work that is being done on Tyneside by Mr. Brighton. His meetings are many and, on the whole, very successful. But in addition to lectures, he also appears very frequently in the local press, and so runs a two-handed propaganda. His quick wit and invariable good humour makes him admirably fitted for the work he is doing bringing the maximum of profit to the cause.

We are glad to note that a new and complete edition of the prose writings of Heinrich Heine, in English, has just been issued. Price 15s. We have not seen it, but we understand that it is a good translation. Our own edition of Heine, in eight volumes, translated by Charles Godfrey Leland, is dated 1893, and there are no books into which we dip more frequently or with greater pleasure. Heine was a Freethinker, one of Germany's greatest writers, and for wit has no superior in Germany, and not many outside. Of course, his books have been burned in Hitler's Germany.

A number of letters, critical of the B.B.C. Brains Trust, have recently appeared in the Press. They range from the irrepressible and impudent stupidities of clergymen complaining that not enough is said about Christ and Christianity to the obvious inadequacy of many of the questions raised and the answers given. For ourselves we regard the Brains Trust as one of the finest presentations of humbug and inadequacy that we have. From the giggles of Joad to the childish humour of the chairman, with his readiness to prevent anything really serious with regard to religion, the whole would be an insult to the British public, were it not that so large a section of the people live and think upon the B.B.C. level.

For example. The questions asked, good or bad, are presumably asked for enlightenment. They are turned into an ordinary school performance of what is known as general knowledge possessed by schoolboys. That test has its place in schools. But the questions asked and answered (?) at a Brains Trust meeting are avowedly not set for that purpose. It is not a test of general knowledge, but a desire to know the why or the wherefore of this or that, or the discussion of points of view. With the result that the partakers in the "Trust" resemble far more a number of trained animals performing their tricks than serious answers to serious questions.

It is solemnly asserted, with what truth we do not know, that the questions asked are unknown before the members meet. But that is really fault number one—and a very great number one. For the question before the "House" is not how much does Madam A. or Professor B. know, but what is the real and best answer to the questions asked. The questioners ask for information, and they are treated to a general intelligence test. The better way would be for questions to be selected by a committee—no member of which is a paid servant of the B.B.C.—and the questions should be sent them a week beforehand, and they could be put before the public with an authoritative answer. That would brush up the knowledge of those who answered the questions and would really enlighten those who answered them. In passing, it would prevent foreigners realising how little many of our leading people understand of the needs of the world.

It might also be run more economically. For 15 guineas—it used to be 20—for sitting round a table for 45 minutes and demonstrating what a poor understanding of life a great number of our educated people have is an extravagant sum. Or, alternatively, the B.B.C. might revive the old "Notes and Queries" journal which conveyed more solid information in a month than the B.B.C. does in a year—or years.

## "NATURAL SELECTION"

[Civil Servants are notified that unmarried mothers are able to have six months' leave of absence, and may return to their jobs when the child is born.—DAILY PRESS.]

No longer need the trusting maid  
Give heed to "Gypsy's Warning,"  
When, fathered by a faithless swain  
Now life within is dawning.

The nation needs that we maintain  
Our numbers in full measure;  
So, heeding not the Grundy ban,  
Will welcome every treasure.

What matter that no formal rites  
Bless Natural Selection?  
True hearts are more than wedding rings  
When merged by true affection.

If Canon This and Bishop That  
Raise hands in holy sorrow,  
So much the worse for worn-out creeds—  
A New Day dawns to-morrow.

W. G. PRIEST.

## THE OLDEST BIT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

"When thou settest in the western horizon of heaven,  
The world is in darkness like the dead.  
They sleep in their chambers,  
Every lion cometh forth from his den.  
Bright is the earth,  
When thou risest in the horizon,  
When thou shinest as Aton by day,  
The darkness is banished.  
How manifold are all thy works!  
They are hidden from before us,  
O thou sole god, whose powers no other possesseth  
Thou didst create the earth according to thy desire.  
The barques sail upstream and downstream alike,  
Every highway is open because thou hast dawned.  
The fish in the river leap up before thee,  
And thy rays are in the midst of the great sea."

These few lines are taken from Professor Breasted's translation of Ikhnaton's hymn called "The Splendour of Aton." He puts verses 20 to 26 of the 104th Psalm of the Hebrews side by side to show, as he says, "the notable similarity in the thought and the sequence."

Here are the verses copied from the Authorised Version of the Old Testament:—

"Thou makest darkness and it is night,  
Wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth.  
The young lions roar after their prey;  
They seek their meat from God.  
The sun ariseth, they get them away,  
And lay them down in their dens.  
Man goeth forth unto his work,  
And to his labour until the evening.  
O Lord, how manifold are thy works!  
In wisdom hast thou made them all;  
The earth is full of thy creatures.  
Yonder is the sea, great and wide,  
Wherein are things creeping innumerable  
Both small and great beasts.  
There go the ships;  
There is leviathan, whom thou hast formed to sport  
with him."

Ikhnaton was born in the royal palace in Egypt at Thebes. His father was Amenhotep III. At the age of 17 he ascended the throne of the Pharaohs as Amenhotep IV.

He began his reign by building a temple to Aton in Thebes and called it "Gem Aton." The emblem of the god was a disc representing the sun with rays ending in hands sometimes grasping the "Ankh," the emblem of life and fertility. At first he tolerated the worship of other gods, but the idea of Aton as the one and only god of the universe, a god of truth and righteousness, the father of all mankind, soon possessed his fanatical mind and led to drastic action in the Egyptian Empire. He therefore closed all the other temples in the Empire and disbanded all other priests save those of Aton. He took all their riches and enriched "Gem Aton." Furthermore, he sent masons to all the temples, tombs and cemeteries to obliterate the names of the gods, not even respecting the tomb of his father.

His own name Amenhotep, which means "Amon rests," he changed into Ikhnaton, which means "Spirit of Aton." He thus became the first monotheistic monarch of history. In the sixth year of his reign we find him in the Holy City of Aton, 500 miles lower down the Nile and about 200 miles upstream from Cairo. He built three holy cities, one in Syria, the northern province of the empire, and another in Nubia, near the third cataract called "Gem Aton," after the original temple at Thebes. The City of Aton in Egypt he named Akhetaton.

Three thousand years later this city was discovered at Tell-el-Amarna, and from inscriptions carved on tombs in its cemetery "The Hymn of Aton" was obtained. No doubt if we could discover the site of the temple to Aton in Syria portions of Ikhnaton's Hymn would be found on the tombs of the aristocracy in the cemetery there. Unfortunately we do not know where this temple was built, but in 1929 F. A. Schaeffer found a temple with a well-stocked library buried under the sands of Syria, near Latakia, famous for its Turkish tobacco. It turns out that he had discovered Ugarit, a town mentioned in the Amarna tablets as being in the Egyptian Empire and ruled by Ikhnaton. A native village now called Ras Shamra is near the spot and has given its name to the numerous tablets found in the temple library. Curiously they are of the same age as the Amarna tablets about 1400 B.C.

Many of these have been translated. One records a fight in heaven between El, the supreme god, and Baal, a lesser deity. It reminds one of Milton's description of the fight between Jehovah and Satan. The language of these Ras Shamra tablets is written in the earliest alphabetic writing known to man. Mr. David Diringer says in an article on "The Alphabet" in the June number of "Antiquity," published this year, that "The Syro-Palestinian Semitic people produced a genius who invented the alphabetic writing from which descended all past and present alphabets." It is centuries older than the Phœnician alphabet. The language bears the same relation to Hebrew as Anglo-Saxon does to modern English. Were the Canaanites the ancestors of the Hebrews?

Professor Hooke, in his "The Origins of Early Semitic Ritual," says: "On the question of the relation of the religion of Ugarit to that of the early Hebrews, both linguistic evidences and topographical references in the Ras Shamra tablets suggest a connection with southern Palestine, as also does the discovery of a tablet at Bethshemesh written in the Ras Shamra alphabetic script." It is worth remembering that no Israelite, Hebrew or Jew had ever been heard of before or during Ikhnaton's reign. No mention of these people occurs in any of the tablets of Tell-el-Amarna or of those of Ras Shamra.

Mr. David Diringer quotes with approval a judgment of Dean Inge in the article on "The Alphabet" regarding some schoolboy scribbling found during excavations at Lachish. Dr. Inge says: "It is the first example of the Hebrew alphabet being learnt systematically." The excavators found this writing on the upper step of a stairway in the sixth century B.C.—that is, eight centuries after Ikhnaton's time. The result of excavations shows that the altars of the Egyptians, Canaanites, Phœnicians and Hebrews were all on the same plan. They were built for sun worship. Solomon's temple in Jerusalem was built on the site of earlier temples on Mount Moriah. East of this rock is the flat summit of the Mount of Olives, over which the rising sun was seen by the priest standing by the altar on the morning of Midsummer Day. Solomon's sun-cult was not finally abolished from among the Hebrews until the return from the Exile. Theon Ezra and his friends about the year 444 B.C. included The Psalms in the earliest written copy of the Old Testament.

HENRY SPENCE.

## THE MORALITY OF CHRISTIANITY

A FIRST and very obvious comment on the morals of Christianity is that nobody knows exactly what they are. Christians differ endlessly on the subject and, both in time and place, emphasis on what is important and what is unimportant has rung endless changes. Think of any subject of behaviour—war, slavery, marriage, alcoholic liquors, the theatre, Sabbath observance, etc.—Christians have no definite ruling from their religion, nor any general principle definite enough to keep them even approximately alike. At the Puritan end of the Christian scale



you will get many things included in a strictness of morals that most people would consider rather trifling matters—taboos against card playing, dancing and other amusement, for instance. At the other end of the Christian scale you will get Jesuit casuistry condoning, sanctioning and even sanctifying (save the mark!) lying, murder or any other dirty work if done "for God and His Holy Church."

Christians are unanimous in claiming that their religion is of divine origin and divinely inspired, and therefore morally perfect. They are unanimous in saying that God is good and morally perfect. Yet they assert that this God who is good runs a torture department; some of them, in fact, assert that he has two torture departments (an inspired religion ought to know without any chance of dispute whether God has two or only one torture departments!). But, very decidedly, torture departments, or even only one, are not moral.

Christians speak of having an internal monitor which gives an infallible judgment on the moral aspect of any case of temptation. Yet it is a commonplace of experience that men who are alike in that they give full regard to their consciences and behave honestly on their dictates, hold contradictory opinions and behave in contrary ways. A Puritan shuns the theatre, dancing, card playing, etc., at the dictate of conscience. Other Christians indulge in these things with perfectly clear consciences. The Puritan will eat meat on a Friday or in Lent without a qualm, where a pious papist would be prevented by his conscience. An Italian brigand would have an active conscience on the minutæ of ritual, but no warning monition to keep him from stealing or murder. Conscience is neither consistent nor authoritative, and is therefore not reliable.

The "definite" authority for Christians is the Bible. But the Bible is not reliable because there is always an opening for argument as to what it means exactly, or, rather, what it meant originally. To this question there is only the answer of private opinion. It is again a commonplace of opinion that people read into the wording of the Bible just what they want it to mean, this being exceedingly easy because convenient texts can be chosen and inconvenient texts "explained." The Bible lacks clarity partly because its language is unscientific and is indeed extravagantly idiomatic and metaphorical, in an idiom which was foreign and, even so, dated from a lost antiquity.

A modern Englishman can hardly read Chaucer, who certainly wrote in English, but the English of centuries ago. What sort of a result would there be if a Chinaman made a translation of Chaucer into Chinese, and then a Russian, completely ignorant of English, translated the Chinese version into Russian! Do you think his work would be anywhere near correct Chaucer? The case of the Bible is very similar. The English version is from Latin and Greek texts which were mostly copies of copies of M.S.S. in older languages, not only the original copies but even the language having disappeared centuries before. How can any definite system proceed from such imperfect origins?

C. R. BOYD FREEMAN.

### THE FEAR OF A WORD

FROM the title-page of his "Biography of the Gods," published by the Macmillan Company of New York in 1941, I learn that the author, A. Eustace Haydon, is Professor of History of Religions at the University of Chicago. After reading the work I unhesitatingly describe it as thoroughly atheistic in import and temper. Yet two passages in the book show that the author would object to this description. The first of them occurs in his preface:—

"Often pride in its own deity led one people to belittle the god of another, even to hurl the epithet 'atheist.' But 'Atheist' is a term without meaning unless there be some

authoritative idea of God that has remained unchanged and unchallenged through the ages, and earth knows no such god. Usually the term means only that the distinctive character of the god of one group is lacking in the interpretation of reality adopted by another."

Surely any of the professor's students knows better than this. In ancient Greece, land of many gods and of the free expression of opinions, men who made fun of the gods, exposed their pretensions and took no part in their worship were plentiful. Maybe the term "atheist" was coined then to denote a "man without a god" (that is, without a god of any kind). In any case, men who in succeeding ages have dealt similarly with the god or gods of later times have been generally recognised as the spiritual descendants of the Greek sceptics, and described by the combination of Greek roots meaning "godless." Although, incidentally, as Professor Haydon points out, the term "atheist" has commonly been incorrectly used by religious believers, this was due to their misunderstanding and not to any lack of meaning in the word itself. Other words, too, are generally misused by the ignorant and prejudiced, but one does not justify wrong interpretations on that account.

Professor Haydon's book shows that all gods without exception are earthborn and rooted in the social needs and aspirations of men. It describes how their characters change as human knowledge grows and cultures spread from one land to another; and how most of them have in time died as a result of the competition of new gods better adapted to the social environment. The author then takes the gods that have survived and still hold sway over large bodies of believers—Ahura Mazda, the many gods of India, China and Japan, Yahweh of the Jews, the Christian God of the west and Allah of Islam—and reveals them as evolved versions of the earlier, more primitive conceptions. In turn he demolishes the dehumanised gods of the religious philosophers as shadowy reflections on the unknown of deities they (the philosophers) have been conditioned to accept by prevailing cultures. His general conclusion is summed up at the end of his chapter on Allah, where he writes:—

"When man at last assumes responsibility for the creation of the values he desires, and finds the plastic stuff of reality yielding readily to his moulding intelligence, and will, some day he will look up from his work, surprised to find that God has taken the opportunity to disappear."

A man who can write so destructively of all theism and yet object to being known as an atheist appears to be conditioned in much the same way as any of the believers whose faiths he explains away so thoroughly. His conditioning has been effected by an environment in which the word "atheism" carries with it a stigma he fears to incur. He first seeks to avoid the stigma by pretending that the epithet "atheist" is meaningless. In his second reference to atheism, however, which does not occur until the final paragraph of his last chapter, he does not hesitate to give it a definite but totally incorrect meaning:—

"More needful than faith in God is faith that man can give love, justice, peace and all his beloved moral values embodiment in human relations. Denial of this faith is the only real atheism."

This is inexcusable, having neither etymological nor historical sanction. It is, indeed, the abusive technique so commonly used by the professional purveyor of superstition. Apart from the two stupid references to atheism quoted, "Biography of the Gods" is such a valuable piece of work that it is a great pity that it is marred by such blots. Let us hope that some day Professor Haydon will have the pleasant surprise of finding that "atheist" is both the truest and most honourable title open to those who liberate their fellows from superstitious beliefs.

P. VICTOR MORRIS.

## BAKER WULLIE'S PRAYER

1.

O God o' Heaven and Earth and Sea,  
My only God, I come to thee,  
Praise, Praise and glory do I gie,  
And thanks accord,  
Thou wha could'st mak a man like me  
O Thou Great Lord.

2.

Where is my marrow, Lord, I trow?  
I hae nae seen him until now,  
Guid God! I'm maist as great as thou  
Art thine ain sel,  
Whaur is he that could ca' my pow  
An empty shell?

3.

O Lord thou ken'st I'm fônd o' drink,  
And wi' the smell o't often stink,  
And that I'm awfu' fônd o' clink  
—But thou'll no blame  
At my wee faults O Lord just wink  
—God, bless thy name!

4.

Within this very Ga'ston toon  
Are some that watch me nicht and noon,  
And glower at me baith up an' doon  
Confound them all,  
But let, O Lord! thy brightest croon  
On my head fall.

5.

Oh Lord, my God wi' favour look,  
Upon my Great Immortal Book,  
That hast the world wi' wonder shook,  
—We made the broth,  
Thou wert the gardener, I the cook;  
Praise be to both!

6.

They'll never mention Shakespeare mair  
The great Carlyle will be nowhere  
His prose will noo look thin and puir  
Compared wi' mine,  
O Lord I am thy "Jewel rare,"  
Thy choicest wine.

7.

There's men within my book, Oh Lord,  
Wha I could slay wi' pen or sword;  
I hate maist o' the stupid horde,  
And could them burn  
To do it noo, I could afford;  
—They've served my turn.

8.

O God, I'm laughin' up my sleeve  
To think I said, "Thou would'st reprove  
Ilk silly sow! that nane will grieve"  
—That creed's too broad,  
Nor in my heart do I believe  
Ae word o't God.

9.

O Lord I'm cock o' a' the walk!  
Wha ever Lord like me could talk?  
A gallant knight abroad I stalk!  
On thy black board,  
Write large my name wi' thine ain chalk  
Let a' see't Lord.

10.

Keep wat the heid and caul' the feet,  
O' that damned polished hypocrite,  
That slippit oot and in sae sweet,  
And me misled,  
Thou threw ower him thy winding sheet,  
And struck him dead.

11.

To think that he did thousan's mak  
And aye wi' sic a puir mooth spak  
Lord send him to Hell's warmest rack!  
He cheated me  
Hoo much he left: my heart it brak,  
And nane to "Lee."

12.

O Lord thou kens't that Lee's my name,  
My life has been a Lee's game;  
In thy heart, Lord, don't vengeance frame,  
But give again  
Aye lots of drink, and wealth and fame  
Amen, amen!

(To be continued)

## CORRESPONDENCE

## HAVE WE ELIMINATED WANT?

Sir.—In your issue of October 10, G. L. C. says: "Man has, with the aid of science, beaten nature in the fight for subsistence and thus eliminated the cause of his being in want." I am sorry he did not describe these scientific discoveries, as I cannot find a single agricultural authority who has any belief in them. The Holkham Estate in Norfolk has been a model farm for two hundred years. In "Country Life" for April 6, 1940, there is an article by J. Gunston, an official of the estate, which says: "Comparing the results of manuring crops about ninety years ago with those of to-day is very illuminating. With all our new knowledge of fertilisers, machinery and new strains of seeds, we can show hardly any gain in crop yields or quality."

In his Presidential address to the Statistical Society in 1922, Sir Henry Row, an eminent agriculturist, said: "Within the past thirty years not only have many agricultural stations and colleges been established, but many millions of public and private money have been spent in promoting agricultural education and research. The result of this expenditure cannot be said to be very apparent in the statistical records of output."

Colin Clark has been three times a Labour candidate. He has also published the best collection of international statistics in the world. Here is his summing-up: "The world is found to be a wretchedly poor place. . . . The age of plenty will still be a long while in coming." "Conditions of Economic Progress" (1940), pages 2 and 4.)

More than half the people in the world live in Asia. Harold Cox, who was a professor of mathematics in India, said: "There are probably at least three hundred million peasant cultivators in Eastern Asia who seldom have more than one meal a day." He might have added that that meal consists almost wholly of rice. Sir John Orr says that everybody should have a pint of milk a day. In Japan the total production of milk is less than four pints a year for each individual. (See "The Japanese Population Problem," by Crocker.) Dr. Aykroyd, who was head of a dietetic college in India, found that the total production of milk in Madras Presidency was only a twentieth part of a pint a day

for each person. I can give you infinite quantities of similar evidence.

What about Europe? In his last book (1937) Trotsky says: "Notwithstanding Russia's indubitable progress in recent years, preserves, sausage, cheese, to say nothing of pastry and confections, are still completely inaccessible to the fundamental mass of the population." That would be true of nearly all Europe. Germany has the highest standard among the larger nations, yet her consumption of beef per head is only one-third of what it is in Britain, and she consumes practically no mutton.

Your correspondent is perfectly right in saying that there is waste of perishable food in new countries, but no amount of wisdom could prevent that. I lived for nearly thirty years in British Columbia, and in the district where I lived, before canneries were built, when the nearest market was four hundred miles away, and when there were not enough pigs available to eat an especially abundant crop of fruit and vegetables, there was sometimes a certain amount of waste. Nothing, however, could be more ludicrous than to blame either the social system or the wickedness of human beings for such misfortunes.

It is also true that new countries do not always produce all they are capable of producing. The reason is that there is only one country in the world—Great Britain—which has the money to buy large quantities of imported food. It is unreasonable to expect Canadian farmers and fishermen to send food to India and China and receive nothing in return.—Yours, etc.,

R. B. KERR.

CHRISTIAN ORIGINS

Sir.—The reply of Mr. Archibald Robertson re "Christian Origins" is somewhat as I expected. It would appear that the Jewish Jehoshua Ben-Pandira dates from approximately 100 B.C. (See Massey's "Historical Jesus and Mythical Christ," page 10, and L. Gordon Ryland's "Did Jesus Ever Live?" page 20). I have searched for many years for a real reply to Massey and have never found one. However, I shall be glad if you will send Mr. Robertson a copy of Massey's essay, as published by The Pioneer Press, with my compliments. It may assist him to a further understanding of the subject, since no scholar claiming to write authoritatively upon this interesting question can do so until he has read the case as presented by Massey, and as amplified in his work, "The Natural Genesis," etc. "ALERT."

TRYPHO.

Sir.—It is a pity that Lady Simon did not go to Justin's "Dialogue" and study it for herself. Trypho distinctly taunts the Christians for having invented Christ, and adds that he is quite unknown. Mr. Howell Smith, in the passage quoted by Lady Simon, adds that "the Jesus whom Christians follow, whose historicity Trypho does not deny, is only a fictitious Messiah." My own reading of Justin's "Dialogue" failed to give any mention of Jesus by Trypho, and there seems still to be a confusion between the two words, Jesus and Christ.—Yours, H. CUTNER.

[Several letters are held over for our next issue.]

OBITUARY

CHARLES BAKER

The death occurred in Pietermaritzburg on August 28, at the age of 78, of Charles Baker, a veteran of the South African Freethought Movement.

Mr. Baker was a Londoner and came to South Africa during the Boer War as a lay schoolmaster in a Roman Catholic order. He was a keen newspaper controversialist and a few years ago engaged the then Bishop of Bloemfontein in a discussion which aroused wide interest and gained many converts for our cause. In late years he was greatly interested in Left politics, but he always welcomed "The Freethinker," and his admiration for Mr. Cohen was unbounded. Like so many Atheists, who think more of others than themselves, he laid not up for himself treasure on earth. He lives on in many hearts the better for having known him. E. A. McDONALD.

EDWARD LEONARD BRYANT

It is with deep regret that we announce the death of Edward Leonard Bryant, youngest son of Mrs. and Mr. E. T. Bryant, of the West London Branch N.S.S., which took place under distressing circumstances on October 13 at the age of 21 years. Delicate from birth, much of his short life was spent in hospitals. Four years ago tuberculosis had developed and sanatorium treatment was undertaken. A major operation was suggested, and fully aware of the chances, he accepted the suggestion. Early signs of success followed the operation, but two days later a bad turn ended in death.

His father, Mr. E. T. Bryant, has for many years been an able and respected member of the N.S.S. Executive, and is well known in Freethought circles in West London, being secretary of the local branch and a speaker from its platform.

Our sincere sympathy is with the members of the family in their grievous loss, an expression of sympathy in which we are confident all Freethinkers will wish to join. R. H. R.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

Report of Executive Meeting Held October 17, 1943

The President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, in the Chair.

Also present: Messrs. Clifton, Hornbrook, A. C. Rosetti, Ebury, Lupton, Silvester, Morris, Miss Woolstone and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and accepted. Financial statement presented. New members were admitted to Blackburn, Chester-le-Street, Bradford, Bristol, North London Branches and the Parent Society. Correspondence from the Inland Revenue, India, Blackburn, Bristol, Southampton and London areas was dealt with and instructions given. Lecture reports from Messrs. Brighton and Clayton were noted, and decisions made on indoor lecture proposals for the season.

The next meeting of the Executive was fixed for November 14, and the proceedings closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,  
General Secretary.

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Sunday, 12 noon: Mr. L. EBURY. Parliament Hill Fields, 3-30 p.m.: Mr. L. EBURY.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Hyde Park).—Sunday, 3 p.m.: A Lecture.

LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m. Mr. J. McCABE: "The Shadow of the Coming Peace."

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Sunday, 3-15 p.m. Mr. J. CLAYTON: A Lecture.

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. ("Key Books," 115, Dale End, Birmingham).—Sunday, 3-30 p.m. Mr. C. H. SMITH: "The Assertion 'Darwin Was a Christian': Science's Answer."

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Laycock's Cafe, Kirkgate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m. ROLAND YOUNG: "The Church in Politics."

Leicester Secular Society (75, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m. Mr. J. W. H. BROWN, M.A.: "The Religious Difficulty in Schools—Some Suggestions for a New Solution."

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