

THE FREETHINKER

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Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Man and His Gods

IN the days of my youth I spent a considerable part of my time in the South Kensington Museum of Natural History. I was, of course, interested in the forms of living types, but I was far more so in the forms of extinct ones. They not only gave me the interest of studying things that were, they helped me the better to understand those forms that were still alive. In those days, about sixty years ago, evolution was very much in the air, and although the religious opposition had broken down to a considerable extent, the churches—or the cuter preachers in them—were beginning to see in what way they could harmonise the world that is with another world that never had been. It was not a question of competing theories, a contest between the acts of God and development of nature without God, for there was only one theory in the field. What the Churches and the Christian Bible gave the world was not a theory of development, it was just a noise. "And God said let there be . . ." was not an account of how anything came to be, it was a splutter of sounds. To-day there is no doubt whatever in the scientific world of the fact of evolution; there is among those qualified to speak with authority merely discussions as to the exact nature of the process.

One of these days our country may rise to the creation of a real museum of religion. There used to be one in France, and there is one, or more than one, in Soviet Russia; we sadly need one in this country. In fact, a true and reliable account of social evolution cannot be understood in its absence. We have some magnificent exhibitions in the geological series, also in the not less fascinating series of animal forms. I am quite certain an arrangement of the different forms of human culture would not be less interesting or less instructive. Anthropology—using that term to cover forms of human devices, the kind of interpretation man developed to explain the meaning of the world—the pictorial history of man from the earliest possible time until to-day, from the sub-human to the complete human, would not be less interesting. And running through this historic record would be gods and devils, demons and angels, ghosts and godlings, the tricks that these gods played on man, and the counter plans of man to ward off the anger of supernatural beings—all these would enable man to understand his past and his future, and to look forward intelligently to what is to come. Without a scientific exploration into the development of the human kind, it is not possible to give a scientific appreciation of the nature of man.

Changing Nature

As we said last week, Topsy's famous conclusion that she "growd," came nearer a fundamental truth than the meaningless information that she was a child of God. The

nature we know is full of changes, but gives no promise of eternity in form. Perhaps the more correct term would be that there is eternal change, for growth implies an end, and of absolute ends nature knows nothing. Different forms appear and disappear, and there is the great probability, even the certainty, that life in all its forms may one day disappear, that "the whole choir of heaven and furniture of earth" may pass "and leave not a wrack behind." "Not eternal" is pretty well stamped on the face of our world.

But the paralysing influence of that B.B.C. fetish, the "Christian tradition," still stands in the way of a general recognition of the real natural history of man. The vast majority of those who, so to speak, still hang on the religious edge, imagine that the appearance of man on the earth is merely corrected by putting back the date of his origin for another thousand years. But the scientific view goes back very far indeed, and it not merely rejects the Christian theory, it simply annihilates it. Nature, no more than God, did not say "Let there be Man." As we said last week, the first steps from the animal to something that was to become something more than man, must have taken place nearly a million years ago—long, long before the gods came into existence. Even then the certainty is that the variation was not of a very marked kind. The great asset which this semi-human form had was that the development came from a gregarious group which, though it lacked language, lived and worked together. It was the first steps of group life that were to prepare the way for a social type. Then so far as the records—not written ones—can help us, step by step, working "on their own," there came beginnings of articulate language, the use of crude tools, and with an accumulation of habits and behaviours that gave to successive generations the benefits that a group enjoys.

One open question to-day—one on which scientists are far from agreement—is whether these very primitive groups of semi-animals were warlike or not. I think the peace party is gaining ground, but one cannot, at least we cannot, be certain on either side. Lest the boggy section of humans should take this as in favour of the "brotherly love" doctrine—and bring forward the two world wars as evidence—we may point out that when we reach the god period mankind knew what warfare meant. The few small groups that might be cited in the direction of peace influence is not very conclusive evidence.

Still sticking to our time-table, but with a willingness to knock off or put on a few thousand years, the plain undeniable fact is that some semi-animal creature or creatures did make an appearance that led finally to a complete man. This semi-animal or semi-human creature, without gods or devils, gradually formed a new kind of community, developed language, had—sometimes—a settled form of shelter, began to fashion tools of a kind to be used for growing food, or gathering it, and created tribal traditions which helped the education of each generation. Man was

travelling along one of the oldest roads known to living things—that of trial and error. You can see that method practised by animals to-day, man merely made it his by the understanding he formed of it.

The Gods and Man

Now, all this was done without a god or gods. Up to a certain point primitive mankind—the real, unadulterated, primitive mankind—never troubled himself about where things came from; they came, and that was enough, and if he did not find what he wanted in one place, he sought for it in another. But when the gods came they came with a rush. More of that presently; just now I want to make good the thesis that the gods never made man or anything else, it was man who made gods. The dependence of gods upon men is to be seen right through recorded history. Human groups have died out, but never for want of a God. But gods have died out by the myriad, for no other reason than that man had ceased to worship them. There is no other significance than this in the cry of the priest that if we are to keep religion alive we must pray, and pray again. And not in private. The prayer must be made in public. None know better than a God that it pays to advertise.

But the gods did emerge. That is an undeniable fact. One may assume that this came from two sources. First, the need for food and other material things, and second because man's knowledge was getting greater, his curiosity stronger. The answer that man gave to his questioning was the only one that could be given at the time, but it was disastrous. We put it this way because doubters about gods appear very early; they were present in ancient Egypt and elsewhere, although ancient Egypt is not so very far back when one is dealing with the origin of the human race. So man went blundering along the god-track, selling much of the prospects of life to overcome the difficulties of the moment.

It was probably in the last quarter of man's history that someone noted that the gods were open to bribery. It may be noted that the gods of the Bible loved the smell of certain perfumes, of cooked meat, of wines, and above all they loved praise and flattery. (It will be noted that while God's worshippers are not now generous with baked meats and wines and other toothsome dainties, they do go it strong with praise of God's greatness and goodness.) There also developed a body of men—Priests, Medicine Men, Miracle Workers, and so forth. Special days were dedicated to gods, and special prayers said to him. Man lived with his eyes closed when he should have kept them wide open. He went on turning out more and more gods, he pitted one god against another, praising one god against another in a way that would have sickened a chorus girl or a cabinet minister. We have a survival of this phase of god worship in the B.B.C. daily grovellings by the 7.55 apology for a man. If God had one of his old-fashioned thunderbolts one might expect him to drop it on the groveller's head as a reminder that it is possible to overdo things.

But there is a phase of this god-worship that gives one the idea that some people have a remnant of self-respect where gods are concerned. Primitive peoples often change their gods when they find that the gods are not pulling their weight. They go to war and the gods give victory to the other side. They till the ground and the crops are ruined

by intense heat or too much rain. They go to war in the name of God and defeat follows. So they show their manhood by rejecting a god who is not doing what he ought to do. We civilised folk, when our gods do not do as they should, go down in a flatter grovel.

We have an example of this in a case that happened in Sicily about seventy years ago. It is related by Sir James Frazer. There had been a very dry season and everything looked as though the crops would be ruined. So the people prayed to their patron saints, and to the pleasure of the Protestants the Roman Catholic god failed to deliver. Another day of prayer was decreed. Still no improvement. Then the worshippers brought out an effigy of the Saint and marched it round the fields to prove to him that the crops would be ruined unless he did something at once. Still no improvement. Patience was exhausted. The effigy was carried to the beach, a service held, and the neglectful saint was thrown into the sea. Whatever is the Sicilian for "That'l larn 'em," they said it.

Who was it that said Camels and Christians are the only two animals who take their burdens kneeling?

CHAPMAN COHEN.

THE RELIGIOUS RACKET AND FREETHOUGHT POLICY IN EDUCATION

AT the Whitsuntide conference of the National Secular Society the question of the Freethought attitude to the new religious racket in the country's schools was discussed, with a view to seeking lines of future policy for the Freethought movement. I took advantage of a brief address at the evening demonstration to bring this aspect of our future work to the notice of the splendid audience that assembled, and to suggest certain lines of action which might be explored in order to provide an antidote to the religious falsehoods which are now being established by law in our education system. It may be useful here to enlarge a little upon what was said at Whitsuntide.

The main point in my remarks was that, as the gauntlet has been thrown down by the religious bodies and the education authorities, in their policy of forcing religion upon our children in "bigger and better" doses, under the cloak of education, we, as a movement, must reconsider our previous attitude of leaving children free from Freethought propaganda, and must pay attention to the business of educating the children a little on our own account.

Formerly, the legal position was that religious instruction in state schools was a voluntary matter. Local education authorities could adopt or reject it as they pleased. Although in practice most authorities supported a measure of religious instruction, the nominal and legal position was that it had not the force of compulsion behind it. Freedom to reject or accept such teaching in state schools did exist; it was purely nominal freedom, in fact, but nevertheless it was a technical freedom which made it technically difficult to lay the charge that religion was being forced upon children by law.

Under the new education Bill, however, which we may presume will soon be law, a very different position arises. By this Bill, our state schools will be converted from places in which religion was a matter of local option or choice into places where a definite form of Christian propaganda will be conducted, carrying with it the State imprimatur, and the full force of the law. This constitutes a great triumph for Christianity, which for the first time in the history of public education becomes constitutionally embodied in our schools as a national and legally enforced religion.

We need not discuss here the details of the religious instruction. It is sufficient to emphasise that Christianity is now the "legal" religion of education, enforced by law, and that certain teachers will be required to assist the parsons as legal propagandists on behalf of a creed for which eighty per cent. of adults, and probably a greater percentage of children, do not care a tuppenny rap!

As Freethinkers, working for the emancipation of the human mind from the slime of primitive superstition, we must recognise honestly and candidly that we have been beaten almost at the last jump—for the present. Since the twentieth century dawned we have seen the influence of the churches weakening rapidly as a result of the growth of scientific knowledge, popularised, in its relation to theology, by the work of our movement. Today, with eight-tenths of the people loosened, though not altogether released, from their religious chains, we see Parliament being compelled by the churches to stop the rot by endowing the Christian creed with educational legality. And perhaps, also, we see the churches receiving their reward, promised at the beginning of the war as the price of their silence and support.

What can we do about it? Are we to take this latest piece of clerical thieving without an effort to counter? I suggest not. When the Christian churches steal the "souls" of our dead ones we may smile at their poverty of morals; but I for one am damned if I will smile passively and allow them to steal the intellects of our little ones. The corpses are past our aid—but the children are crying out for it.

Between the measure of scientific teaching which the education system is bound to give to children (the times being what they are) and the religious mush that is inflicted upon them as a "moral" veneer, there is a hopeless and irreconcilable contradiction which not only puzzles the young mind because of its absurdity, but which also prevents the development of true moral conceptions in keeping with the factual knowledge of the day. This absurd and ever-growing clash between secular knowledge and religious belief probably sets up a conflict in the youthful mind which does far more harm, by retarding the capacity for clear-cut judgement, than was formerly the case, when religious belief, less opposed by scientific explanations, at least did not produce a state of constant bewilderment in an effort to reconcile the two.

But I need not labour that position, for most of us are aware that the young mind develops in a more efficient, more honest, and a cleaner form, in proportion to the reduced influence of the priest and his lying creed. We have valuable statistics on the point.

Inspired (and justified) by the legal powers which the other side has secured to impose its doctrines upon youth, we must abandon our former attitude of "don't try to influence the child." It becomes our duty now, if we believe in the value of our Freethought, to work for religious emancipation through the child. This does not mean that we need become as ignorant or as bigoted as the Christians, by imposing a creed upon children. It means that we must counter the work of the churches by removing the influence of the creed which they impose. They have forced the issue. Their policy indicates ours. In securing legal sanction to teach children a pack of lies and fables they automatically establish for us the right to expose to the children the falsehoods they are being taught. The so-called rights of parents—the biggest humbug ever shouted by the churches—totally disappear under this system which the churches themselves have produced.

Religion taught by law abrogates every vestige of parental "right" or choice; and justifies every opponent of religion—indeed, every right-minded citizen—in opposing its influence to the uttermost. State-taught religion is but one step from state-taught philosophy, and the value of the latter to any would-be-totalitarian government should be as plain as the shape of Nazi Germany on the map of Europe.

So, just as the work of the churches is to be impersonal (that is, that anybody's children, the children of all parents, are to be taught religion without the personal intervention or approval of parents) so must our work be impersonal. We must not be satisfied to expose religious lies merely to our own children, or to our friends' children; we must follow the same comprehensive lines as the churches, saying what we have to say to all children who come under the influence of the churches' legalised dope.

Although what I am saying here is purely personal, and does not necessarily represent the views of the N.S.S., I believe that there is official sympathy with this viewpoint. Mr. G. H. Taylor, who is well aware of the dangers inherent in the new form of religious instruction, secured a resolution at Conference that students in the teachers' training colleges should be approached by the N.S.S. on the question, and my own suggestion that special literature for children should be prepared was added to the resolution.

But it must not stop at that. This is a business in which a mere flash-in-the-pan for a few weeks or months will fail to have any useful effect. It is a task calling for the energies of every individual Freethinker, to be consistently applied to enlightening the children—anybody's children—concerning the fables of religion, and the moral worthlessness of Christianity in particular, and to inculcating that far higher moral precept of dependence upon one's self and upon one's fellows rather than upon a god-idea which belongs to the mental infancy of the race.

Most Freethinkers can perform these tasks to some extent without official help—but if they will begin to act individually, at once, perhaps it will not be long before the N.S.S. finds itself able to implement the Conference proposals by putting some useful literary ammunition into our hands, so that we may act collectively in speeding the destruction of the latest scheme of the Lord's Lawful Liars.

F. J. CORINA.

BOUGHT WITH A PRICE

A biblical expression, "Bought with a price." No truer words were ever written, as we have all been sold. Bought by corpse worship, blood redemption, mythology, and educated in our schools from a Bible which is unclean in parts, illogical from cover to cover and full of errors. The authors of the Revised Version of the Bible found over 39,000 errors and needed corrections, so what proof have men that the whole jolly lot is not error?

Nathaniel was sitting under a tree reading this Bible (which was not printed until A.D. 1600), and Jesus asked him if he understood what he was reading. It seems to me that the greatest error God ever made was to let his son go back home only forty days after his resurrection. If ever an interpreter of this book was needed, it certainly is in 1944. There are 200 different ways taught in England alone, as to the way to get to heaven. If only God had included some simple map in his wonderful record, and not left us all in the hands of collection gatherers, etc., we might have been tempted to book a return ticket; although, as the same crowd will be there, as here, it would not be exactly exciting.

Bought with a price, sold at the cost of a few coppers in the plate or bag each week, but still fighting each other like wild animals, still begging the Almighty to save us. The price we pay is the price of "reason," and until we buy back our reason, we shall be ever as now—sold, lock, stock and barrel. Come, let us reason together.

J. A. FREEMAN.

"THE RUINS, OR A SURVEY OF THE REVOLUTIONS OF EMPIRES,"

to which is added "THE LAW OF NATURE." By C. F. VOLNEY. A Revision of the Translation of 1795, with an Introduction. Price 3s.; postage 2d.

ACID DROPS

JULY 4th was American Independence Day, and the B.B.C. put on a special show. No complaint is to be made on that head, but there was one peculiar thing that is worth noting. One character in the show was, of course, Washington, and in one of the speeches he is made to address the rather dissipated and down-hearted soldiers. He opens the speech with the famous: "These are the times that try men's souls," a splendid opening, but we are afraid that many listeners would credit Washington with the authorship—perhaps the B.B.C. meant it to be so understood. The author was, of course, Thomas Paine, that great bugbear of the "Christian tradition." The only certain thing in this connection is that one must check the B.B.C.'s references and be careful of its statements, particularly where the "Christian tradition" is concerned. The one certain thing in the matter of U.S.A. is that Paine saved the situation at a very critical moment.

What a lot of "jogging" does the mind of God appear to need! For example, Rev. W. H. Elliott says that we should, at all times of the day repeat such expressions as "God help us all," "God give them strength" (our airmen), "God give him courage," etc. But why, if people believe in a God, is it necessary to keep on saying these things? Is it to jog God's memory? Or does God behave as some petted child, or as a flat-headed adult might act? If there is a God it should be his responsibility to see that he helps his creatures as much as he can. It is no defence for him to say: "Well, they didn't ask me for help." A help that must be asked for, pleaded for, prayed for, reflects little credit on whoever grants it. It would seem that both God and the Rev. W. H. Elliot should learn from the manner in which most men give help. They do not need to be asked; they give and count the betterment that follows as ample payment. But then gods are always behind men and women where common sense and decent feeling are concerned.

We are beginning to feel a little sympathetic towards the clergy of this country. Following custom, when the war commenced there was the usual reminder to God that his children were now engaged in war and he was expected to do his bit. But with most of the special days of prayer, either some disaster followed or nothing startling happened. So the fixed days of national prayer were given up. It was too suggestive that either God could do nothing, or that he had decided to give the Germans plenty of rope before he did something spectacular.

The next move was to "advise"—a polite term for "order"—the King to form a prayer—written by the Archbishop of Canterbury—asking God to do something. That also fell rather flat. But alongside of this the clergy, having realised that offering a fixed day of prayer and then have done with it, was not enough for God. It was like giving a man a week's food and insisting on his eating it all at one sitting. God, like man, wants regular daily rations. To be well fed on Sunday and starved for the rest of the week was not good enough. So no miracles followed.

The last plan was rather artful, but does not appear to have been dramatic in its effect. This plan was to keep the churches open every day in the week, and all day, so that anyone passing could just drop in, more or less casually, and make a few remarks to God in the shape of a reminder that a war is on and he is expected to do something. It should be said that this new move was to date with the opening of a second front, so that God could have the full strength of the armed forces behind—or in front—of him. But this plan brought no better results, for the weather has been bad when it was expected to be good, and the landings of men and munitions do not appear to have been as they would have been had the weather been better. And not any striking number of civilians have availed themselves of the opportunity of telling God just what they thought about him, or the war, or what he is doing, or not doing.

There is just one explanation of this unpleasant situation. Russia is getting on very well. But Russia, officially, has no

God, no days of prayer, and has no anointed ruler. But if God helps us to knock out the Germans in France and Italy, that will also help godless Russia to gain a quicker victory. Even heaven has its problems, and some are very knotty.

There is another point worth noting. Jews have joined with Christians in praying to their god for help and victory. But the God to whom Christians pray has a son. The God to whom Jews pray has no family at all. He is, and always was, a bachelor. So the case may stand thus: If the Jew is right, God may feel hurt with being credited as the father of a child that was born in "shady" circumstances in Palestine. Anyone would feel hurt in such a situation. If, on the other hand, God really has a son, and one in whom he is "well pleased," he may naturally feel angry at this son of his being treated with contempt. And as he cannot help one without helping the other he has decided not to help either. It is plain that even heaven has its problems.

Very timidly we suggest a way. As the address of both these praying groups is the same heaven, why should not the Jew commence his prayer with "To the God who has neither wife nor child"? And the Christian could address his prayers "To God and his family." That should make the situation clear.

Dr. Welch is the chief of the religious section of the B.B.C. You may judge his mental futility by listening to his voice—he does his weekly weakly turn in the "Anvil." He admits that at least two millions regularly listen to the religious broadcasting (we should like to know how many take it for an extra performance of Tommy Handley), but he did *not* say (1) how many were believers, and (2) how many who listened seriously to what was being said in favour of Christianity did not go straight away and register themselves as another servant of Satan.

Invasion Day (D-Day) was also the day set for the Roman Catholic Saint Norbert. We have never before heard of the gentleman, but if the management of the invasion was left to the Saint—some people believe the armed forces had something to do with it—it is a pity that Mr. Norbert did not hunt up a few brother saints to see that the weather was favourable to the Allies. But perhaps there was war in heaven as well as in Brittany. Or perhaps the saints were having a row with each other over the share out of the candles that were burned out in their honour. We don't know.

By the way, it is rather significant that in spite of the water shortage there have been no prayers offered to God for rain. But specifically that is one of the functions of the clergy of the established church. As we pointed out a few weeks ago, there are two distinct prayers for rain—one asking for rain, and a second one reminding God not to drown the world as he did in the days of Noah, but to just send enough to meet the need of his worshippers. It is the duty of the Archbishops to see that God is reminded of his neglect and to ask for water for his children. For we are that, as the B.B.C. preachers tell us; and the earthly parent who denied his children water would soon be lugged before a police magistrate; and if it is in order to ask God to win a war for us, it must be surely proper to ask him for more rain.

Of course, it may be pointed out that the rainfall on this country is adequate for all, and all that is needed is proper distribution. That being the case, it should remain for God to so move the great landowners in the two Houses of Parliament to see that proper provision is made to distribute the water where it is required. God would then move them to stand up for his religion in the schools. The spiritual qualities of the Government is so well attuned to God's welfare that a Bill has been introduced to see that our schools are drenched with religion. But he has not thought of acting where the water supply is concerned. Perhaps he may take this tip from the "Freethinker."

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

J. STEELE.—Thanks for items. Such things are useful, even when they are not immediately noted. Yes, we have listened to the alleged discussions between Professor Greenstead and Dr. Evans. It is pure B.B.C. nonsense. Dr. Evans, who was supposed to represent scientific unbelief in religion, was obviously unacquainted with the real objections against religion, unless what he might have liked to say was not permitted; and Professor Greenstead would have been so much chicken feed for anyone who understood the case against religion. The B.B.C. alleged discussions are generally of a fraudulent character when they touch upon either religion or vital social questions. We shall be dealing with the B.B.C. in our next issue.

C. E. MORTON.—Thanks. We are looking after ourselves. But part of "ourselves" is the cause in which we have spent our life. We are not foolish enough—enough to discard all reasonable care.

W. DUNCAN, T. OWEN, P. ELLIS LYONS AND MANY OTHERS.—Many thanks for prompt response for paper for June 25 and July 2.

BENEVOLENT FUND N.S.S.—The General Secretary N.S.S. gratefully acknowledges a donation of ten shillings from Mr. A. Hewitt to the Benevolent Fund of the Society.

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.

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SUGAR PLUMS

WHAT must have been an interesting debate took place recently at Keighley in the I.L.P. Hall; we believe in the initiative of the local branch of the N.S.S. The subject under discussion was "The Origin of Sunday and Christianity," quite a comprehensive outline, and the hall was packed, with the listeners exhibiting the keenest interest in the speeches. The representative of the Christian side was the Rev. H. M. Brook, while Councillor Shackleton, president of the Keighley Branch, N.S.S., took the Freethinking side, and acquitted himself to the obvious satisfaction of Freethinkers, and even appears to have gained the goodwill of others present.

After the debate by Messrs. Brook and Shackleton there was a general discussion among the audience, which gave opportunities to a further elucidation of the points at issue. Among these speakers were Mr. J. F. Corina and our old friend H. Stewart Wishart. Altogether the exhibition was a profitable one, and appears to have been carried through with good feeling by all. The branch hopes to arrange similar discussions on the same grounds.

By a small majority a West Bromwich body of voters have decided in favour of the Sunday openings of cinemas. The Churches worked hard to prevent opposition to their own Sunday performances, but it is not expected that, having taken a sensible step, the people of West Bromwich will go back on their votes.

The General Secretary N.S.S., will be on vacation from 22nd July, during which only matters of pressing importance will be dealt with. Attention will be given to all details received up to that date.

May we again ask the assistance of our readers who can advise us of printers who are willing to undertake the printing of pamphlets and books. It is heartbreaking to see so many increased demands for Freethought writings and then find ourselves faced with a paper shortage.

Some sections of the Co-operative Movement seem to have been badly bitten by the religious bug, not only in their willingness to go yodelling to the Almighty to thank him for allowing them to survive 100 years in face of the opposition of a Christian social system, but also in their readiness to adopt many of the lesser and meaner tricks of Christianity. An example of this has come to our notice recently. A boy whose general talents were quite satisfactory applied for a job at a Co-operative Society. One of the first questions he was asked was: "Do you attend Sunday School?" Being a Freethinker's son the obvious answer was "No," although it is a pity he didn't tell the committee chairman to mind his own damned business. The interview ended at that, the boy being asked no questions about his abilities to do the job concerned. The committee chairman, needless to say, is a prominent religious figure in his locality. Names and details will be gladly supplied to any prominent Co-operator who will dare to raise the question inside the movement, or who has sufficient influence to raise the matter in the Co-operative Press.

The parallel of this mean and bigoted attitude can be found within the Church itself, where a boy who wanted to join the Boy Scouts was turned down by the minister because he had never been baptised. Thus does the religion of love inspire its devotees to "suffer little children . . ." Or should it be "to cause little children to suffer"?

The wittiest and most comprehensive description of Roman Catholicism—bearing in mind its many fasts and multitude of miracles—was given by Horace Walpole in the 18th century. He said it offered us too little to eat and too much to swallow.

A rather lively correspondence seems to be going on in the "Oxford Times" for and against Christianity; and for once the editor seems to be giving both sides a hearing. In the issue for June 23 there is a rather lengthy but telling letter from Mr. W. Hawley. How long the discussion will appear we cannot tell. Usually it ends with pressure being brought to bear on the editor, with the usual result of the discussion being brought to an abrupt end.

Before the new Education Bill has become law we are beginning to see "the shape of things to come." It is quite clear that every attempt will be made to put into immediate operation the Christianising the schools from beginning to end of each day's attendance. But some of the members of the House of Lords have been pressing for the teachers to be given instruction that their pupils are to be told that children must become associated with a Church. The next move ought to be to compel the teachers to see that their pupils do so. The teachers have only themselves to thank in the matter.

Sir Alexander Fleming appears to be, so far as we may judge—and on this point we are no authority whatever—credited with discovering Penicillin, which is proving of such great value in treating wounds. But Sir Alexander is also a staunch Christian—save where science is concerned—and does not miss an opportunity to drag religion on the carpet. So he told a church audience that Penicillin was given to us at this time by Providence. We would not say this is not the case, but we remark that we should like to know why the hell Providence did not give it to us earlier. It would have been just as useful in recent wars, even in those cases brought about by bow and arrow. It would also have been useful for mere civilians, even if they were not engaged in war work. Imagine what we should think of a scientist who declined to give knowledge that would save both suffering and life, because the spectacular result would not be great enough. It looks as though God loves an advertisement as much as though he were a mere Prime Minister.

NEW APHORISMS FOR FREETHINKERS

Without hell—no arson.
 Without pay—no parson.
 Without rations—no dish-up.
 Without lordship—no Bishop.

* * *

Religion, like Government, is the bane of the many for the gain of the few.

* * *

Faith is a fiction founded on fear.

* * *

Jesus wept over ancient Jerusalem. Then what would he have done over modern London?

* * *

Certainly Death kills two birds with one stone, for it is the end of dying as well as living.

* * *

The infallible recipe for a Better World is (if you believe it) this world war, which is saving us from the horrors of peace.

* * *

God said "Let there be light"—and man has dwelt in moral and mental darkness ever since.

* * *

To an unmusical man the everlasting screeching of the Blessed in Heaven would be as insupportable as the everlasting screaming of the Damned in Hell. Think of an eternity of Promenade Concerts! I wouldn't like it, but I suppose Sir Henry Wood!

* * *

Love? Love has done far more harm than hate in this world. The love of Christ produced the most fiercely persecuting religion the world has known.

* * *

Dr. Johnson said that Patriotism was the last refuge of a scoundrel. But in war-time it is the first.

* * *

I have never met Mr. Judas Iscariot. But I have met Mrs. Judith Iscariot and Miss Judy Iscariot quite frequently.

* * *

Even Almighty God (they say) cannot alter the Past. Then he is inferior to the British daily press—which can and does.

* * *

We in England believe in the Christian reformation of criminals, and that is why we hang our repentant murderers; for it is surprising how it improves a man to be hanged by the neck until he is dead, with a Christian clergyman standing by to approve this pastime in the name of a God of infinite mercy and love.

* * *

"The truth is great and shall prevail." So are lies; and so shall lies—especially on the radio and in advertising and in official propaganda.

* * *

Co-belligerents, no-belligerents and so-belligerents make up the European Family of Nations or the Concert of Europe.

* * *

What a pity the Omniscient God did not give His Only Son, Jesus Christ, a scientific education, for then he would have cast out bacteria instead of devils from the sick. He would have talked of bacilli instead of Beelzebub, spirochetes rather than Saducees, and sanitation instead of Satan.

* * *

"All soldiers run away," said the great Duke of Wellington. One only wishes they would; all of them.

* * *

The Pope is the only ruler who is popularly supposed to be fighting on both sides, Axis and Allies, at once. Except, of course, God.

* * *

"The Pope is the true successor of Peter." Yes, indeed; in Peter's perjury, cowardice, and betrayal of his Master.

When other liars, thieves and murderers get together you call it "a criminal conspiracy" and expect no good from it. But if the Governments of the civilised world get together you call it "a League of Nations"—and what do you expect?

C. G. L. DU CANN.

REPLY TO A CRITIC

I WAS interested in Rowland's commentary on my essay in "Now," but there are comments I would wish to make. I find it impossible to understand why I should be cited as representing mysticism and anti-politicism on the strength of what I said there. My attitude to humanity is certainly not mystical—to analyse past historical trends and attempt to abstract from them a hypothesis of human behaviour ought not to offend even T. H. Huxley's susceptibilities, and to generalise as I did that human beings formed into societies tend to act irresponsibly is no more mystical than to say that men have gall-bladders and tend to get stones in them. Where I think the reviewer was led astray was in the interpretation he put on my remark about adopting an anti-rational attitude to history—all I mean is that an overwhelming body of experience and evidence lies against the idea of a historically perfectable society. When I wish to return to "myth" in art, I mean that I wish to return to the common emotional patterns which all races display, all literature employs, and all human activity expresses, and that return is only to be regarded as religious in so far as the tragic *agon* between personal aspiration and an impersonal universe is "religious."

I am certainly not happy in the company of either of the bodies of writers Rowland quotes. With the exception of Eliot, who is a poet rather than an ideologist, there is not one of them I respect. Neither the pseudo-rational optimism of the Wells party nor the irrational optimism of the neo-Christians has any correspondence with reality. Wells expects man to behave suddenly as never before because he has acquired technical skill—Lewis assumes a doctrine of grace to try to extract himself from the contemplation of pessimism or of an uncontrollable process. The universe is not a controllable process. Neither, by reason of the pattern of human conduct, is Society.

Let me make it perfectly clear that I am not anti-political and I advocate no withdrawal into contemplation. I believe that the only valid relationships are those that exist between responsible individuals, that human conduct is vitiated as soon as anyone is willing to accept a corporate allegiance to an idea. The Cause, the C.P., the Old School which immediately takes on human form and is treated thereupon as an *individual*, to whom one owes obligations and in serving whom one abrogates responsibility to real people and thereupon butchers the Jews or the civilians of Hamburg in a blissful illusion of responsible conduct: I advocate a robust politic of responsibility to the individual and defiance to all pseudo-individual causes, which I call disobedience or anarchism and you can name as you please. I absolutely fail to see in what way this view resembles Lewis' or Dorothy Sayers'. I repeat that I know of no society which attempts, as our own or that of Germany does, to pass itself off as an individual, which has not been utterly irresponsible. I know of no evidence that human reaction-patterns have undergone the smallest change within recorded history. I only ask my critics to study the record of past societies and see if there is any evidence anywhere in that record that the behaviour of individuals in society has changed even as much as the behaviour of human gall-bladders or human red corpuscles. You do not call it mysticism to infer that physiology, while it changes, does so at so slow a rate as to become stationary in specialised organisms. I believe that there is evidence of similar behaviour in social and individual psychology.

ALEX COMFORT.

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AN INTELLIGENCE TEST FOR ANTS

I CONSTRUCTED four miniature houses of worship—a Moham-
medan mosque, a Hindu temple, a Jewish synagogue, a
Christian cathedral—and placed them in a row. I then marked
fifteen ants with red paint and turned them loose. They made
several trips to and fro, glancing in at the places of worship,
but not entering. I then turned loose fifteen more, painted
blue; they acted just as the red ones had done. I now gilded
fifteen and turned them loose. No change in result; the 45
travelled back and forth in a hurry, persistently and continu-
ously visiting each fane, but never entering. This satisfied me
that these ants were without religious prejudices—just what I
wished; for under no other conditions would my next and greater
experiment be valuable.

I now placed a small square of white paper within the door
of each fane; and upon the mosque paper I put a pinch of putty,
upon the temple paper a dab of tar, upon the synagogue paper
a trifle of turpentine, and upon the cathedral paper a small cube
of sugar. First I liberated the red ants. They examined and
rejected the putty, the tar and the turpentine, and then took
to the sugar with zeal and apparent sincere conviction. I next
liberated the blue ants, and they did exactly as the red ones
had done. The gilded ants followed. The preceding results
were precisely repeated. This seemed to prove that ants destitute
of religious prejudice will always prefer Christianity to any other
creed.

However, to make sure, I removed the ants and put putty in
the cathedral and sugar in the mosque. I now liberated the
ants in a body, and they rushed tumultuously to the cathedral.
I was very much touched and gratified, and went back in the
room to write down the event; but when I came back the ants
had all apostatized and had gone over to the Mohammedan
communion.

I said that I had been too hasty in my conclusions, and
naturally felt rebuked and humbled. With diminished confi-
dence I went on with the test to the finish. I placed the sugar
first in one house of worship, then in another, till I had tried
them all. With this result: whatever Church I put the sugar
in, that was the one the ants straightway joined. This was
true beyond a shadow of doubt, that in religious matters the
ant is the opposite of man, for man cares for but one thing:
to find the only true Church; whereas the ant hunts for the
one with the sugar in it.

MARK TWAIN.

CORRESPONDENCE

THAT SCURRILOUS ATHEIST!

SIR,—In the "Radio Times" for last week Lionel Hale reviews
G. B. Shaw's "The Adventures of the Black Girl in her Search
for God."

In the course of his remarks he refers to "the God of the myopic
scientific Atheist."

I should like to ask Mr. Hale where he has discovered this
wonder of wonders, and furthermore, seeing that the Atheist does
not believe in any god or gods, whether he has not been letting
his imagination run riot?

In any case, how the Christians expect to derive any degree
of comfort from this play of Shaw's is utterly beyond the compre-
hension of any sensibly minded person. As the disintegration of
Christian theology, and its consequent decay, becomes more
apparent, it is funny how its protagonists snatch at any straw—
I nearly said Shaw—to bolster up their dying creeds.—Yours,
etc.,

"ALBERT."

"A BOMBHELL."

SIR,—With reference to the fine article by F. A. Hornibrook,
may I suggest that readers will find the several books by Douglas
Reed (journalist) exceedingly good reading, dealing as they do
with the world situation over the past ten years. In many
instances they are more condemnatory than "Gracchus." I
have been fascinated—although not agreeing with everything
he says—with his style and criticisms.—Yours, etc.,

T. D. SMITH.

A PROTEST

SIR,—In the "Freethinker" of May 21, at the close of an
article by C. G. L. Du Cann, were these words: "The political
mountebanks of our day, such as Hitler, Stalin, Roosevelt,
Churchill."

It is, as you are well aware, a common mistake to argue from
the particular to the general, and it appears to me likely that this
kind of talk is calculated to cause new readers, who are inclined
to take an interest in Freethought, to cease their enquiries in
disgust, assuming, wrongly of course, that as Du Cann is a
contributor to the "Freethinker" he is a typical Freethinker.
Further, I believe that the great majority of your readers, old
and new, whilst often having different views from others, to
which they are, of course, entitled to give expression, when doing
so observe the ordinary rules of decency. This letter is somewhat
belated owing to pressure of business, but is none the less
applicable.—Yours, etc.,

J. R. WOOD.

[There is no editorial responsibility for opinions expressed in a
signed article. So long as there is a point of view that is
reasonably worth reading, it is enough. We have sufficient
confidence in the intelligence of our readers to leave acceptance
or rejection to them.—EDITOR.]

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

West London Branch N.S.S. (Hyde Park)—Sunday, 3 p.m.
Messrs. Wood, PAGE, and other speakers.

LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square,
W.C. 1): Sunday, 11-0, JOHN KATZ, B.A.—"Civilisation and
Ethics."

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Birmingham Branch, N.S.S.: Ramble to Lickey; tram 70; meet
at Lickey Terminus, 3-30; tea, 5-0, at Cofton Tea Rooms.

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place): Sunday, 6 45,
Mr. C. McCALL—a Lecture.

Edinburgh Branch, N.S.S. (Mound): Debate—Rev. GORDON
LIVINGSTONE v. Mr. F. SMITHIES.

Kingston-on-Thames Branch N.S.S. (Kingston Market, Memorial
Corner): Sunday, 7-0, Messrs. F. SODEN and J. W. BARKER will
lecture.

Newcastle-on-Tyne Branch N.S.S. (Bigg Market)—Sunday 7 p.m.
Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON: A Lecture.

THE BIBLE HANDBOOK. For Freethinkers and Enquiring
Christians. Edited by G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball.
Passages cited are under headings: BIBLE CONTRADICTIONS,
BIBLE ATROCITIES, BIBLE IMMORALITIES, INDECENCIES
AND OBSCENITIES, BIBLE ABSURDITIES, UNFULFILLED PRO-
PHECIES AND BROKEN PROMISES. Price 2s. 6d.; postage 2½d.

THEISM OR ATHEISM, by Chapman Cohen. Price 3s. 6d.;
postage 2½d.

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CHURCH, by Colonel Ingersoll.
Price 2d.; postage 1d.

THERE ARE NO CHRISTIANS, by C. G. L. Du Cann.
Price 4d.; postage 1d.

AN EXPEDITION

IT was in the days just before the Russian Revolution that this story really began. A group of us Russian aviators were stationed at a lonely, temporary outpost about 25 miles north-west of Mount Ararat. The day was dry and terribly hot, as August days so often are in this semi-desert land. Even the lizards were flattened out under the shady side of the rocks and twigs, their mouths open and tongues lashing out as if each panting breath would be their last. Far up on the side of the mountain we could see a thunder-shower, while still farther up we could see the white snow-caps of Mount Ararat, which has snow all the year round because of its great height. How we longed for some of that snow! Then the miracle happened. The captain walked in and announced that Plane No. 7 had its new supercharger installed and was ready for high altitude tests, and ordered my friend and me to make the test. At last we could escape the heat!

Needless to say, we wasted no time in getting on our parachutes, strapping on our oxygen cans, and doing all the other half-dozen things that have to be done before going up. Then a climb into the cockpit, safety-belts fastened, a mechanic gives the prop a flick, and yells "Contact!"—and in less time than it takes to tell it, we were in the air. We circled the field several times until we hit the 14,000ft. mark, and then stopped climbing for a few minutes to get used to the altitude. I looked over to the right at the beautiful snow-capped peak, now just a little above us, and for some reason I can't explain, turned and headed the plane straight towards it. My friend turned round and looked at me with question marks in his eyes, but there was too much noise for him to ask questions. After all, 25 miles doesn't seem much at 100 miles an hour.

As I looked down at the great stone battlements surrounding the lower part of this mountain, I remembered having heard it had never been climbed since the year 700 B.C., when some pilgrims were supposed to have gone up there to scrape some tar off an old shipwreck, to make good luck emblems to wear round their necks, to prevent their crops being destroyed by excessive rainfall. The legend said they had left in haste after a bolt of lightning struck near them, and they had never returned. Silly ancients! Who had ever heard of a shipwreck on a mountain-top?

A couple of miles around the snow-capped dome, and then a long, swift glide down the south side, and then we suddenly came upon a perfect little gem of a lake, blue as sapphire but still frozen over on the shady side. We circled round, and returned for another look at it. I looked, and nearly fainted! A submarine! No, it wasn't, for it had stubby masts, but the top was rounded over with only a flat catwalk about five feet across down the length of it. What a strange craft, built as though the designer had expected the waves to roll over the top most of the time, and had engineered it to wallow in the sea like a log, with those stubby masts carrying enough sail to keep it facing the waves.

We flew down as closely as safety permitted, and took several circles round it. We were surprised when we got close to it at the immense size of the thing, for it was as long as a city block and would compare very favourably in size with a modern battleship of to-day. It was grounded on the shore of the lake, with about one-fourth under water. It had been partly dismantled on one side near the front, and on the other side there was a great doorway nearly twenty feet square, but with the other door gone. This seemed quite out of proportion, as even to-day ships seldom have doors even half that large.

After seeing all we could from the air, we broke all speed records back down to the airport. When we related our find

the laughter was loud and long. Some accused us of getting drunk on too much oxygen, and there were many other remarks.

The captain, however, was serious. He asked us several questions, and ended by saying: "Take me up there: I want to see it." We made the trip without incident, and returned to the airport. "What do you make of it?" I asked, as we climbed out of the plane. "Astounding!" he replied. "Do you know what that ship is?" "Of course not, sir." "Ever heard of Noah's Ark?" "Yes, sir, but I don't understand what a legend of Noah's Ark has to do with our finding this strange thing 14,000ft. up a mountain top." "This strange craft," explained the captain, "is Noah's Ark. It has been sitting up there for nearly 5,000 years. Being frozen up for nine or ten months of the year it couldn't rot, and has been in cold storage, as it were, all this time. You have made the most amazing discovery of the age."

When the captain sent in his report to the Russian Government it aroused considerable interest, and the Czar sent two special companies of soldiers to climb the mountain. One group of fifty men attacked one side, and the other group attacked the big mountain from the other side. Two weeks of hard work were required to chop out a trail along the cliffs of the lower part of the mountain, and it was nearly a month before the Ark was reached. Complete measurements were taken, and plans drawn of it, as well as many photographs, all of which were sent to the Czar of Russia.

The Ark was found to contain hundreds of small rooms, and some rooms very large, with high ceilings. The unusually large rooms had a fence of great timbers across them, some of which were two feet thick, as designed to hold beasts ten times the size of elephants. Other rooms were lined with tiers of cages, somewhat like one sees to-day at a poultry show, only instead of chicken-wire they had rows of tiny iron bars along the front.

Everything was heavily painted with a wax-like paint resembling shellac, and the workmanship of the craft showed all the signs of a high type of civilisation. The wood used throughout was oleander, which belongs to the cypress family and never rots; which, of course, coupled with the fact of it being painted and it being frozen most of the time, accounted for its perfect preservation.

The expedition found on the peak of the mountain above the ship the burned remains of the timbers which were missing out of one side of the ship. It seems as if these timbers had been hauled up to the top of the peak, and used to build a tiny, one-roomed shrine, inside of which was a rough stone hearth like the altars the Hebrews used for sacrifices, and it had either caught fire from the altar or been struck by lightning, as the timbers were considerably burned and charred over, and the roof was completely burned off.

A few days after this expedition sent its report to the Czar, the Government was overthrown, and godless Bolshevism took over, so that the records were never made public, and were probably destroyed in the zeal of the Bolsheviks to discredit all religion and belief in the truth of the Bible. We White Russians of the Air Fleet escaped through Armenia, and four of us came to America, where we could be free to live according to the Good Old Book, which we had seen for ourselves to be absolutely true, even to as fantastic sounding a thing as a world flood.

VLADIMIR ROSKOVITSKY.

"CHALLENGE TO RELIGION." Four Lectures. By CHAPMAN COHEN. Price 1s. 3d.; postage 1½d.

"SHAKESPEARE AND OTHER ESSAYS." By G. W. FOOTB. Price 2s.; postage 2½d.