

THE FREETHINKER

Founded 1881

Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

Vol. LXVI.—No. 40

Sunday, October 6, 1946

Price Threepence

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

On Hurting One's Feelings

IT is almost inevitable that in discussions things will be said that are likely to make supersensitive people wince. An expression thoughtlessly uttered may touch one's hearers upon a tender spot, or disturb an idea that one is in the habit of regarding as worthy of a special measure of respect. Or certain associations may have gathered round some special belief, and a brusque sentence may produce the sudden reaction of an electric shock. Such occurrences are almost inevitable; and it is surprising how anxious the average Christian is to avoid these happenings. His conduct for these tender associations is such that he never ceases to demand in discussion that beliefs shall be treated with the greatest possible respect. Not a sentence, not a word, may be uttered that is likely to wound the feelings of the most sensitive. Sentiments must be respected; feelings must not be lacerated.

I have omitted to say that the sentiments and feelings that are to be so carefully respected and treated are the opinions of Christians. Where the feelings of others are concerned no precautions need be taken. The Christian does not hesitate to attack the opinions of others with the alleged ferocity of a savage and the rough language of an educated boogyman. He will use sarcasm—if he is capable—and so long as it fits his character. He will use ridicule or sarcasm, slander and abuse, just as it suits his case or pleases his honour. If the Freethinker retorts in kind he will be solemnly reminded that religion is a sacred object, and the Freethinker has no right to outrage the feelings of people—Christian people. It is the more remarkable that he takes what we have said quite seriously. He does not mind saying plainly that if a man does not believe in Christianity he should keep his unbelief to himself. At least he should state his unbelief quietly—so that he is not heard. The Christian will deal with an atheistic humbug with pleasure, but it is the one who *will* speak, nay, will even shout from the pulpits to be heard, that is particularly disliked by the disciples of Jesus.

Now I am not going to argue that the Freethinker wounds the feelings of a Christian as a kind of sport, or as repayment for abuse given. Every one in discussion must, if he is honest, say things that his opposite does not like to hear, but if honesty is to be practised I do not see how it can be prevented. It is in the B.B.C. discussions, and the reward for it is that no one pays any particular attention. When a discussion is on the carpet the question of the other fellow's feelings does not arise save, of course, the use of slander and personal abuse. The duty of a writer or speaker is to say exactly what he believes and in language that will not be misunderstood. If by some means or other I have got it into my head that certain of my own opinions must be treated with a special degree of tenderness the

responsibility is mine, not my opponent's. I have found, after a very lengthy experience, that the honest man does not ask for protection in discussion and the dishonest one does not deserve it.

It must be observed that this solicitude concerning people's feelings is most active in connection with religion. In politics and in other matters feelings are left to take care of themselves; even within the religious world the same thing obtains. Consider the quality of the language often used against Roman Catholics by Protestants, or of some Catholics against Protestants, or both against the detested Atheist. The Freethinker is asked to observe, towards something which he believes is of great injury to social development, as though he had respect for it. The plea for gentleness in disputation is brought forward only when the unbeliever takes the field. The Freethinker is asked to do this on grounds that every real Freethinker is bound to challenge—that religious opinions are of the greatest value and must be approached with deference.

Now I deny that altogether. I deny that religious beliefs concerning the nature of a "soul" or the existence of God, the belief of a future life, the divinity of Jesus, are in themselves of greater value than any other question under discussion. There are a thousand and one subjects that are of far greater importance than hell, God and similar questions. It is of far greater importance for the nations of the world to-day to get right with each other than it is for us to "get right with God." To get right with a god is a matter of mere speculation, and those who are not getting better with God are much better employed in getting better with each other. What view we take of each other may lead to the betterment of humanity, while the view of God can be of consequence to a horde of medicine men clad in fantastic dresses of a Christmas-tree quality. What we believe about militarism may mar for ever our lives and land our civilisation in ruins. But disbelief in God may still leave us as "good neighbours." If religion was really of value it could not be set aside as it has been. There are no natural facts, good or bad, that cannot exist without the belief in God. A man may be good or bad, honest or dishonest, and the test of what he is is quite apart from religious theories.

This is no more mischievous than the common saying that we ought to respect other people's opinions. I deny that altogether. We should not do anything of the kind. Opinion deserves respect only so far as we believe it to be sound. In proportion, as we believe an opinion to be right we may respect it, but no man has the right to demand that one may treat a lie with the respect that belongs to a demonstrated truth. The truth is that what the average Christian calls respect for his opinion is mainly a demand that interferes with the freedom of opinion of others. At present the feelings of Christians are "outraged" by other people being permitted to go to a cinema. No one is forced

to go to the "pictures," no one is prevented going to church if he wishes, to hear a parson telling his congregation they are worthless in the sight of God. In a general way freedom for Christians is often another name for forbidding freedom to others. Theatres must be closed on Sunday lest the people should prefer a good play to a miserable sermon.

It is not because the Freethinker sets a small value upon opinion that he so often "outrages" the beliefs of Christians. He does that because he is moving from a higher level than the majority of Christians can appreciate. He does not see that every opinion carries with it a responsibility, for opinion is made neither by you nor me, it is something in its essence that stretches back to the earliest time. And for that reason the plea that it is not the time to let loose this or that belief is not merely the cry of the coward, it is the expression of disloyalty to the human race. The proper time to call a lie a lie is when it is seen to be a lie, not to wait until the new truth has become twisted out of recognition. Indeed, truth often suffers more from the timidity of its friends than it does from the malignity of its enemies.

Above all, the claim—expressed or implied—that religious feelings must be protected against assault involves persecution of some kind. It means persecution in its most cowardly form. The early Christian Church did what it could openly to suppress unwanted criticism. The modern Church has proclaimed its love of freedom and then has done its best to prevent criticism. To say that an opinion is false and should be openly suppressed is one thing, and it is a straightforward process. But formally to grant the right of opinion and then try by underhand methods to prevent opinion being expressed is hypocrisy in its most distressful form. Error is normally established and religion inevitably takes the form of social disease. For mark, it is not always the hypocrisy of conscious dissimulation. That would be a comparatively healthy form, because it evidences the capacity for seeing things as they are. The hypocrisy that is generated develops a curious unconsciousness of the lie that is being established. It is an hypocrisy that is ingrained, organic and secured by the elimination of honesty of speech and directness of thought which keeps social life now to a very low level. Religious opinion has been protected from attack by the lowering of the intellectual values. And when the history of religion is carefully read and faithfully interpreted it will be found to be the greatest of the crimes against the well-being of the human race.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

THE "HISTORICITY" OF THE GODS

THE well-known Roman Catholic "modernist" scholar, Alfred Loisy (1859-1940), was responsible for the aphorism: "God does not enter History: the historian never meets Him there." However, as regards this statement, one can only say flatly that it simply is not true: in fact, the only answer to it is a flat negative. Alfred Loisy was a Biblical scholar of real eminence, the author of important critical works on the Bible; and, if only as a man of rare integrity who sacrificed a brilliant ecclesiastical career on account of his convictions he deserves our respect. None the less, one can only regard the above statement as being, beyond any doubt, one of the most absurd statements ever uttered even by a theologian—which is saying a good deal!

"God" not only inhabits History, but its unique creation. Taken out of History, the "Gods" are homeless. They then have to take refuge in the flimsy "pre-fabricated" substitute make-shifts of metaphysics; which are apt to prove feeble barriers against the critical storm. Outside human history the gods—and their final amalgamation, "God"—are left "without visible means of support." Like one of their number, "the Son of Man," they have nowhere to lay their heads.

If we cast a critical glance at "the outline of history," we find gods at every turn and, we may add, at every conceivable stage of development. Human history is, in fact, a laboratory for gods, and never surely in any other branch of science is any laboratory so rich in concrete specimens. In the phrasology of Aristotle—which, incidentally, Catholic theology, based as it is on the philosophic categories of the Stagyrte, should appreciate—the divine "substance" is concealed by innumerable "accidents."

All sorts and manners of gods have existed in the past. To be sure, a good many of them still survive in the current laboratory of anthropology. There are stupid gods and also wise ones—though never wiser than their human creators; this last limitation is a never-varying characteristic of godhead! There are war-like gods; any number of them. And even a few pacifist gods. There are sociable gods; gregarious gods who like company; and solitary gods who prefer their own: "the flight of the alone to the alone." And their divine tastes differ as much as do their natures. For example, we have cannibal-gods, who like human flesh; and also gods who practise inverted cannibalism, and like to be eaten themselves. And we have gods who appear as asses—not to mention any number who talk like asses! There are, in fact, "high-brow" gods, and "low-brow" gods: gods whose brain excels their brawn; and probably a more common species, gods whose brawn exceeds their brain. There are gods whose literary tastes would be entirely satisfied by "The News of the World," and gods capable of reading "The Times," and, indeed, of writing appropriate articles for that pontifical journal. Indeed in the most polished flights of godhead it might even be possible to find one or two who were intellectually capable of reading "The Freethinker," and deducing from Mr. Cohen's anthropological surveys their own mortality and (shall we put it politely?) their own contingent historical role!

That "contingent historical role" is thus amply proved even by the most cursory examination of the historical evolution of Divinity. Not only did Man "Make God in his own image," but he made him—or, rather, them—to suit his innumerable moods and his endless "phases of culture." In brief the gods are the creation of History. They do not live, and they have never lived, anywhere else. And the historic process is a rarifying process. The Darwinian doctrine of "natural selection" applies to the gods: they were weeded out by internal competition long before external criticism first appeared upon the scene. The Marxist "law of the concentration of capital" applies also in the Divine sphere: the last amalgamation produces "God" from the multifarious "gods." And the Divine Survivor, the celestial "Rothschild," finally passes from the scene as the result of the atheistic human revolution.

Thus, in view of the overwhelming evidence at our disposal that gods are human creations—and, to be sure, we shall go on believing this until anyone can show us some proof of non-human creation: for example, a wise god created by a stone-age people or vice-versa; an "atomic-age" god created by a stone-age tribe would be the kind of evidence we require—we are entitled to ask the theologians and their metaphysical hangers-on to be reasonable and to stop locating God in the outer fringes of the "Milky Way," in "Heaven," or in some other out-of-the-way and equally unsuitable area for a bona-fide man-made god. The climate of such places is too chilly: cruelty to gods is surely a moral—though not yet a legal—offence as much as cruelty to animals or children?

Nor should the mystics be permitted to indulge in their favourite habit of hiding the whereabouts of "God" with long and confusing words. For example, to say with St. Augustine that "God is a circle whose circumference is everywhere and whose centre is nowhere" undoubtedly sounds very impressive, particularly if you say it slowly! But, really, what does it mean? No one has ever seen or heard of a "circle" of such a character. And, one can add, that "a circle without a circumference" would not be a circle at all—at any rate except to very circular reasoning!

When, in fact, we contemplate the extremely vague and unsatisfying verbiage which is all that metaphysics and "natural" theology can give us about any extra-human and "extra-territorial" gods, we are confirmed in our unshakeable belief that, just as "the proper study of mankind is man," the proper place to study gods is history. And here, in solid and satisfying contrast to the pallid abstractions and ambiguity of metaphysical extra-terrestrial "Beings" (sic), what a wealth of evidence we have at our disposal! Gods positively crowd us out! They jostle us, delight us, confuse us, with "their infinite variety." Every conceivable taste is abundantly satisfied. From Jupiter, with his penchant for hurling thunderbolts at the least provocation, to Thor, whose speciality was hammers; from the ferocious Aztec Huitzilopotchli, who liked his human sacrificial meat raw, to the handsome Greek, Apollo, who was himself a work of classical art; we find every human quality exemplified in the Divine Pantheon. (We leave the goddesses to the feminists, not being ourselves qualified to write adequately and with sufficient adjectives upon so enthralling a theme!)

Compared to this brilliant array, what is Sir James Jeans' "Divine Mathematician" except a mathematical nightmare, abstracted into a pale ghost? Against such "modernist" heresies let us again proclaim our unshaken faith in the "real presence" of the gods; of all of them. Real? Of course they are real: as real to their worshippers as "Mr. Pickwick" to his admirers; or to take a more suitable literary parallel, as the stupendous hero of "Paradise Lost," who was none other than Satan, who would "rather reign in Hell than serve in Heaven." Which only goes to show how deep are the roots of Froethought!

To be sure, gods who live outside the confines of History are as unsatisfactory, as unconvincing as the "men" who are portrayed by ultra-imaginative writers as living on Mars. They do not fit, in either example, into the landscape since they do not "belong" there. And "Utopias" rarely sound real. Nor is the effort of theologians to represent a "Being without body, parts, or passions," usually any more convincing. The trouble with such "Beings" is that "History will out": they so rarely part with their passions! Nor are the metaphysicians much more fortunate with their "unknowable"—whom, incidentally, most of them seem to know intimately.

The truth is that Man has not the mental or physical apparatus to ask "ultimate questions": his "last word" is that there are no "last words." As even Henri Bergson, one of the most famous and talented of metaphysicians once observed—and he was far enough from being a materialist—the human brain is only capable of working in "solids." And, certainly, metaphysics are not solid—in any sense! We recall the old eighteenth century author who wrote "metaphysics, of which Man can know nothing, and politics of which he will know nothing." A useful enough distinction.

The gods then are historical. And they are historical only and altogether. Of their "historicity," at least, no one can possibly dispute. They are, in spite of M. Loisy, historical products. They have, indeed, every human attribute: their births, marriages, deaths, all are recorded in the human register, which is history. And now, by process of competitive elimination, they have reached their final stage in the "One God" of the monotheistic creeds—with the "Christian Evidence Society"—

et al—to "apologise" for his existence. But it is quite unnecessary to do so; both he and his "apologists" are too modest!

In any case, the time for "apologies" is past. They will avail nothing. For, with their last surviving "amalgamation" of the gods into "God," the end is at hand for the gods; for all of them. For (to paraphrase Marx) "one god always kills many." "The last (divine) expropriator" is now himself due to be "expropriated": in religious language "god" is to be absorbed into the "infinite," into his creator, human history. For the atheistic Human Revolution is now, at long last, due, when God incurs the annihilating anger of his creator, Man. In the ever-growing light of knowledge the gods, like "old soldiers," just "fade away." And a history sadly bereaved, must look elsewhere for the satisfaction of its inexhaustible cosmic spirit. An heretical mediaeval mystic, Joachim of Flora (A.D. 12th century), summed up the history of the world as follows:—

"The reign of the Father is past; the reign of the Son is passing; the reign of the Holy Ghost is at hand."

And that is all that is left of the gods: just ghosts!

F. A. RIDLEY.

GOD AND THE "DAILY EXPRESS"

THE National Farmers' Union the other week petitioned the Church to pray for fine weather. Even the "Daily Express" went all religious and published the following prayer:—

"O God, heavenly Father, whose gift it is, that the rain doth fall, the earth is fruitful, beasts increase and fishes do multiply, Behold, we beseech Thee, the afflictions of Thy people; and grant that the scarcity and dearth, which we do now most justly suffer for our iniquity, may through Thy goodness be mercifully turned into cheapness and plenty."

But it also published a report from Moscow (Express News Service):—

"The weather is everywhere excellent for harvesting. The unusually hot summer has been so good for the sugar beet crop that a fall in the price of sugar in the off-ration shops is possible. Winter crops in the north are already ripe."

No doubt we are very dense and stupid but we would like the Church—or the "Daily Express"—to explain just why Britons are so iniquitous that they deserve to be starved while God is so pleased with the godless Russians that he sends them a bumper harvest? It is almost unbelievable in this present age of science and learning that seemingly normal men are no more mentally advanced than primitive savages. A hundred years ago in the Hawaiian Islands the poor heathens prayed to their Rain-makers and Rain-stoppers, yet to-day a highly civilised nation does exactly the same thing—merely exchanging one witch-doctor for another. Is it really possible there are still people in England who know nothing about Natural Causes and the science of Meteorology? Are we so ignorant that we honestly believe a mythical being sits up above and decides when to turn on a shower or change the direction of a wind? If so, why do we allow the Government to squander millions on an elaborate meteorological set-up when we can get just what weather we want by asking God? (providing we confess ourselves miserable sinners first!)

Come, come, my friends, you cannot have it both ways. Either the weather is governed by natural laws or it isn't. If you prefer to believe it is nothing but the whim of a God who purposely ruins our crops in the hope that we will fall on our knees and beg him to desist, then do so, but don't call yourselves civilised and don't go sending out missionaries to the savages—for you both believe the same thing.

Of course, how you are going to explain away Russia and the fact that France, U.S.A., Australia, Canada and the Argentine report immense harvests I really don't know. Obviously this must be a very wicked country to be the only one deserving of God's spite while he blesses and fattens the Russians who just don't believe in him!

No doubt our archbishops and farmers know the answer but so far I have not heard it. Perhaps Lord Beaverbrook knows. But it seems to me if our farmers have no more intelligence than this then they deserve to have their crops spoiled and the wonder is that they have enough intelligence to grow any crops.

As for the "Daily Express" prayer—it may be good journalism but it makes very poor sense. I can only suppose the beasts and fishes were put in as a make-weight—but why leave out the insects and birds? And why beseech God to behold the afflictions of his people when *He* has chosen to send those afflictions and must know all about them anyway? And how a *dearth* can be turned into *cheapness* is something my pitiful knowledge of the English language cannot comprehend. I assume that what the writer means to say is: "For God's sake turn the tap off!" But perhaps flowery nonsense is considered more god-like.

Having already enjoyed a thoroughly wet summer and weeks of almost continuous rain it would not be illogical to expect a spell of fine weather soon, but of course it would at once be seized upon as proof positive of divine intervention and answer to prayer. However, the Salvation Army is not even waiting for that to happen. An envelope has already been pushed through my letter-box begging for my Harvest Thanksgiving contribution. Thanksgiving for *what*—a ruined harvest? I should hope all sensible people would think twice before thanking God with their hard-earned money for trying to starve them. Yet, without doubt, all the churches in all the land will hold their Thanksgiving services as usual and take our cash without turning a hair in token of our gratitude to God for all his loving un-kindness. Apparently Christians are so gullible, so un-reasoning and so sheep-like that having been told to offer thanks for a good harvest they will consider it quite right and sensible to give thanks for a bad one!

W. H. WOOD.

THE FORGOTTEN FACTOR

THIS play at the Grand Opera House, Belfast, was remarkable in many ways. Admission was free, but tickets were difficult to get and Oxford Group audiences are decidedly bourgeois. For one week the huge theatre was filled nightly with what would decidedly be called a "better class" audience. The first thing that struck me was that the tickets had been carefully graded and allocated, with the customary class distinctions. The best people were in the best seats, and I was therefore in the gallery. I loathe galleries, iron railings, seats that have been walked on, that are hard boards, and have no backs, and from which I can look down into velvet cushioned spacious comfort enjoyed by those whose whole lives are spacious and velvet-cushioned.

I had two motives in going to this Moral Re-Armament display. I am a student of the drama, and I am interested in "Movements." Let us take the play first. Admittedly, it is a propaganda effort (no author's name is given), and although the scene is an American one, it is "an industrial drama" that could fit events in Britain. Judged as a play, it is crude melodrama, packed with the old, old tricks, the characterisations and situations, sicklied o'er with mushy sentimentality. What has been done well by the playwrights of the past and the cinema of to-day was done badly here. The story is of industrial trouble, and the forgotten factor, if remembered, will put things O.K. Wilson, the Henry Ford guy, is worried. He has a silly wife, a cheeky daughter, a difficult son, "trouble at the works," and

cold coffee at home. Jim Rankin (good name that), the trades union official, is a coarse, embittered leader who hates the boss as much as Wilson hates him. Neither will see the viewpoint of the other, they will not even meet. But young Wilson, a schoolboy, studies "Labour," sees God, and acquires a Messianic third floor back complex. He pleads successfully with Dad and with Jim, bringing them together in the last act. Employer and worker now see God, drink coffee together, and shake hands. Curtain. Everybody cheers, the struggle between capital and labour is settled. It could all be as easy as that; all the troubles of this world could be settled by goodwill . . .

Joe Bush, Jim's rival, is out to make mischief, there is a riot and Polly Rankin is carried in wounded and laid on a sofa. Her head is bandaged, but the producer forgot to dip the cloth in red ink as we used to do for poor Maggie the drunkard's daughter. Jim suddenly remembers a dead cheild of the dead past, holds his head, everybody snivels. But Polly has great powers of recuperation, and when Dad says he is sorry (God is moving him) and he will now let her go to the play, she leaps from her couch, embraces him, and shouts "whoopee!" But when, in excess of emotion he intimates that he will take mother to Polly's show, his good lady cracks up "Not that I don't want to go, Jim, for we haven't been out together for eighteen years, but don't you see . . ." breakdown, tears, then perception (doubtless God prompting) that the poor soul has no clothes. Gloriously Jim rises to it and commands Polly to take Ma to the stores and rig her out regardless of cost or coupons. In the final act, there is the well-worn scene of the howling, growling, mob-marching on the boss's house, to have it out with him, and when the gang burst in, of course, Joe accuses Jim of double-crossing. This is the tamest bunch of hoodlums I have met. They howl like hell one minute, then relapse into dead silence while pious dope is drivelled out by Jim. Lionel Barrymore should have come in on his tricycle to give the big shot the works and put pep into the performance. What the workers worked at, what the trouble was, and how a thousand dissatisfied men had their grievances adjusted when the boss and their leader used the forgotten factor in their deliberations, God only knows.

I cannot see that any "lesson" can be taken out of this drivelled by any self-respecting, intelligent person. Nor can I bring myself to believe that the shrewd intelligences behind this presentation think this play good art or good argument. As a contribution to the problem of post-war conditions it must be dismissed as frivolous.

Now, as to the "movement." When assured that a group cares nothing for creed, colour, class-distinction, position, influence, and so forth, I am always suspicious. Instinctively I associate this protestation of broadmindedness with a smoke-screen for a very decided purpose, invariably tyrannical. There seems here to be a narrowness of outlook, confining brotherhood to those who accept "the Christian way of life," and decidedly there is hostility to materialistic conceptions. What and where might I ask, are those "malignant materialist forces menacing our civilisation, and which must be exterminated?" There is so much of the Unite to Fight stuff that one might even wonder if this is a new form of Fascism! We are told by Peter Howard that "this movement is not Christianity with a cushion, but Christianity with a cross," and has spread over 50 different countries. Chauvinism with a Chicago accent doesn't impress me, and playing on Ulster's pride in the war, bridgeheads and so forth leads me to wonder what their "line" is in other countries. I give you a hundred-to-one they don't tell the same tale in Dublin!

I have very definite ideas as to what Doctor Buchman and his followers are getting at, and I have also a very definite idea of that a civic welcome in Belfast was out of order. But a refutation of this cult calls for more than a short article. Whether this organisation is intended to dam the upsurge of Communism or to stem the flow of Freethought, whether its intention is

benevolent or sinister; make no mistake, it has big financial backing and it is tremendously well-staged. Details have been carefully worked out, there have been punch, pep, shock, surprise, and audacity in the presentation. From the gift programme to the final cup of cawfay, everything is in the American salesman technique. The psychologist can almost hear Jimmy Durante saying to his team, "Atta boys an' dames, it's all yours; give the suckers the dope."

The curtain rises. There is a chorus of forty. Twenty lovelies in brilliantly coloured dresses, but no leg appeal. Ten male figures smartly tailored are at each side of the girls. Nothing is left to chance, there is no spontaneity; gestures, head turnings, impromptu giggles, have all been carefully rehearsed and drilled into them. And that goes for the speeches, too. I saw the show twice, so I know. After the first chorus, a comedian was introduced and he favoured us with "Little Mrs. Mulligan and old Ma Brown," and he described their fight outside the "Rose and Crown." Good music hall stuff, but fancy our austere clergy and their dignity! The comedian was then joined by his wife, also a capable performer, and they did a very tasteful duet, "Sing a little song," in which we were all invited to join. A crooner now appeared, and there was the hint of a moral in his song about his pal, Bill Muggins of the blitz, who always reflected: "It takes a little more than bricks and mortar to build a nappy 'ome."

The speeches really said nothing and the play wound up the proceedings. It was said to be the answer to the atomic bomb, and we were told how President Truman thought Moral Re-Armament was the hope of the world. Loud cheers. Ye gods and little Japs, can nobody think? I couldn't cheer, for the whole show took my breath away.

J. EFFEL.

ISRAEL, HEARKEN YE!

IT is to the credit of civilised humanity that as a stricken and persecuted minority, all that is just and reasonable in the world is extended to you with heartfelt sympathy. Clear-minded humans the world over fulminated against the oppressors of your masses, and millions of your scarcely more fortunate fellow creatures toiled, sweated and died that Nemesis should overtake your persecutors of recent years.

One hates to think that human effort of such a nature has been misdirected but, before you set another fuse or fire another shot, I urge you to stay your hand, and reason.

Way back into antiquity you sought to out-bid your fellow men for power. True, you did not, as did your modern Fascist persecutors, hurl new and terrible missiles across the earth, but your move was more subtle. In those ancient times men were as powerful as their gods. It was an age of gods. Powerful gods of metal, of stone, animal and vegetable gods, sun and moon gods, good gods and evil gods. Right into the midst of this motley assembly, Israel projected a super-god. A god who commanded sun, moon, stars, animals and vegetables because he had in one short week created them all. A god of gods. His wrath exceeded the most fearsome concepts of man, with a love for you, his chosen people, tender beyond all understanding. His laws, written by his own finger, left no doubt as to the fearful consequences of disobedience when he commanded. Innocents unborn should suffer horribly for forebears having accepted the rule of any other gods.

So, with this jealous, vindictive god leading the way, as a pall of smoke by day and a pillar of fire by night, you, Israel, marched against all mankind. Had not your god commanded that you should prosper over all the earth? But, strange to relate, we have no man's word for all this, save your own!

Unfortunately for you, and all of us, the tragedy was only just beginning. Your god decided, so the scribes tell us, to consort with one of your virgin females, and a son was born. An Israelite? Most certainly. He could be none other, even

as those who wrote of him. This son was, admittedly, repudiated by most of Israel, even though you yourselves predicted the advent of some such being. Be this as it may, those laws of your God, Jehovah, control directly or indirectly the majority of the masses of five continents today! Moreover, your God of Gods, his earthly spouse, and that anystic Son have between them sponsored to the full the development of human bestiality.

For more than a thousand years it is one story of limbs slowly crushed to pulp, bodies disjointed on the rack, molten metal poured down throats, eyes gouged and burnt out, and roastings alive. Yes, Israel, *the evolution of the technique used on you in Belsen, Buchenwald and Dachau.*

But what of your Almighty God? You say he gave you a country. Why then did you leave it? If you were driven out, why then did Jehovah allow the followers of inferior gods to so drive you? And, indeed, why had you to fight for your gift in the first instance? What need should there be today for your mine, bomb and bullet campaign to secure what your God gave you at your very inception? Why need you villify Ishmael, your own flesh and blood except that Ishmaelites use "Allah" instead of "Eloi"?

Israel, you made Jehovah that he might make you. Many are the great Hebrew intellects down the centuries which have renounced and repudiated this hideous myth, that human kind should benefit more fully by their having functioned. When, in defence of your claims, you point out how Jewish intellect has enriched humanity, you never admit that most of these became great by having spewed out Jehovah in their youth. How much purer and more efficient is the mind set to work for human progress, rather than to further the interests of Javeh, Bible, Rabbi and Synagogue?

These, in the long ago, meant Canaan, milk and honey. Today they have grown to mean gold, diamonds and oil. Have a care, Israel! Co-believers in your God, his wife and Son, tried to exterminate you. But for the effort of those who have ceased as a nation to further propagate the tragic hoax, they might have acquired power to succeed.

Get out of the God business. Disband your God-ridden, rabbi-prompted Zionist societies. Your history is the most damning indictment of God-rule mankind has ever known. Hitler and Mussolini created and nourished that which eventually destroyed them. You, Israel, created Jehovah.

Is He to be your Frankenstein?

G. L. C.

PROFESSOR THEODOR HARTWIG

ONE-TIME President of the International of the Proletarian Freethinkers, survived the Nazi terror in Europe by sheer miracle. This well known social democratic fighter, author of several books and pamphlets, teacher, educator, scientist, lived in hiding in Brno and Prague for six long years. Though in constant danger and threatened with persecution, though living under appalling circumstances, exposed to privations, he went on working. His brochure, "Germany Under Hitler," published 1933 by a Czech publishing house, would have meant sure and cruel death from the hands of the new "masters" had they read it. One day he was arrested and questioned in the notorious Petchek Palais. After a while it became clear that the Gestapo had confused him with another man of the same name, and he was released before his case was examined more thoroughly. Yet, from that day on he was prepared for the worst.

Of Professor Hartwig's work there are ten brochures to be found in the Public Library in New York. Thus the book burners in Germany were outwitted. These ten brochures give testimony of a life, devoted to the fight for progress and against Fascism. The gamut of his writings runs from mathematics over philosophy, social science, psychology, science of religion to people's education.

ACID DROPS

Everyone—or almost everyone—is aware that the Roman Catholic Church has a very large stock of saints whose business it is to cure the faithful from all disease. And when we say *all* disease we mean it. There is a saint for nearly every complaint—sore throats, rheumatism and fevers of all kinds; and as new diseases come—generally old ones with differences—so a new medical saint appears on the scene. Finally, it matters not whether special cases are cured or not. As disease is cured, when it is not the fault lies with the sufferer. It is a case of “heads I win, tails you lose.” To be quite fair, it is not only the Catholic Church which announces that God sends diseases as well as cures. Protestants have the same conviction—officially. The Church of England says quite plainly that all ailments come from God. Catholics and Protestants are all well in this, although there are different ways of approach.

But we did not expect to find the game would be given away so plainly as it was done by the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Liverpool, although his name, “Downey,” is rather suggestive. The matter before the Liverpool meeting was the need for more blood donors. At present the supply is dangerously low. One of the speakers was Archbishop Downey. He told the audience that but for the transfusion of three pints of blood during his illness he would not have been present at the meeting.

This confession was followed by a speech from the Bishop of Warrington, who said that within a few hours the lives of two children had been saved. But this is giving the game away. The Catholic forgoes his operating angels, the Protestant brings in blood transfusion, and neither brings in God or a saint. Both priests said in effect: “You may choose what saints or what God you please, but whatever you do, don’t forget the blood transfusion.” Really we should not be surprised if there was a meeting of angels and all went on strike. A strong heavenly union is needed.

We cannot, we ought not, prevent by force freedom of speech, but that should throw upon men who are in the public eye greater care of when and where they speak. Unfortunately the rule is not followed. First we had Mr. Churchill telling the world that Britain and the U.S.A. must walk armed together—an avowal of deep distrust and an invitation to create other groups also ready to fight; and as a number of people are planning for war, war is very likely to come.

Now we find that Field Marshal Montgomery has been (from the “Chicago Tribune”) telling the “Command and staff college, Kansas” that there must be a “British-American alliance to assure the closest and most effective co-operation in the next war.” If that is not making for more war, what is it?

Of course, it may be said that if the U.S.A. and Britain are not together preparing for war others will, and that makes war certain. To that all we need say is that if the world is to be made up of nations each striving to fool the other, would it not be better to cease all the talk of love and peace and come back to the German ideal of military greatness? If men like Montgomery are to spend their energy in getting ready for war, and still more war, by forming groups ready for war, let us openly say that sheer brute strength alone will enable some groups of humans to survive in a world that is not worth living in.

An inquiry recently in the “Sunday Times” as to where Voltaire said, “I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it,” has produced a definite answer which ought, once and for all, to scotch attributing to him something he never said. It was actually *made up* by Miss Tallentyre in her book “The Friends of Voltaire,” for in a letter written in 1935 she said: “. . . I did not intend to imply that Voltaire used these words verbatim. . . . They are rather a paraphrase of ‘Think for yourselves and let others enjoy the privilege to do so too,’ from the ‘Essay on Toleration.’” It appears also that the phrase was used by President Lincoln, but we expect Voltaire will get the credit for it for many generations still to come. Some blunders can never be caught up with.

At last the necessary alterations have been made in King’s Regulations re Church Parades in the Army, and instructions have been sent to all commands to that effect. But there is always a little powder in the jam. An Army Council Instruction says it down that “no impediment or counter-attraction such as parades, organised games, or recreation will be permitted during the normal hours of church service.” God help any unlucky chaps caught playing crown and anchor, or kicking a football during those sacred hours when the parson is imploring the Almighty to look after him—or similar nonsense. Recreation on a Sunday morning—Hell has no fury like a parson scorned!

After all, Lourdes is standing no nonsense from Fatima or any other shrine, and the other week no fewer than 100,000 men made a pilgrimage to it, queuing up in thousands to take part in the never-ending Masses. It was most inspiring and everything would have been even better if the Virgin had consented to perform just one, teeny miracle—one would have been enough; but unfortunately the records so far have not given such a wonderful piece of news to confound the hardened sceptic. Even the 300 women present were unable to help in this way—a most unusual thing, for generally the miracles occur to women far more than to men. Lourdes’ only chance now is to do something in the heavenly line like Fatima. Why not make the moon completely disappear?

While we are on the subject of “shrines” we ought to point out that there is one in Canada, at Cap de la Madeleine in Quebec. The other day 50,000 pilgrims visited it with crowds of sick people, who got a blessing from Archbishop Beckman. That is all—a blessing; again not a single, solitary miracle! It is all very saddening.

Where religion is on the carpet nothing seems too foolish for use. In a provincial paper—the “Evening Express”—“views” are published from which we take a complaint at American novels. It appears they have no “major philosopher on moral problems.” We wonder what the writer meant, then we came on a few words that explained much. It was a complaint illustrated by the paper man saying that the American novel was like “an adolescent atheist, he is ashamed to admit that the mysticism of Luke and Matthew is poetry of overwhelming beauty.” We really do not know what he means, but we are sure it will impress some—because they also will not understand it.

Can anyone tell us why, in both Houses of Parliament, prayers are said? We do not believe that members are wiser or more trustworthy after saying prayers—or listening to a parson saying them. And in any case, there is no greater wisdom—or honesty—shown by the prayerful ones than is noticeable among those who do not have prayers. Do the prayers indicate that a section of the members need a miracle to make them reasonably intelligent or trustworthy? Why, then, pray? We are strongly of opinion that there is no legal warranty for these prayers. It may be added that the salary of the clergyman who says the prayers is *not* paid so much for each person who attends “divine service.” His salary is a yearly one.

We have been rashly judging God for the bad weather we have had and also for the destruction of vast quantities of food due to the rain. The vicar of Old Newton, near Ipswich, has put the matter right. He says that “in the Divine mind” the rain was necessary to counteract the injury that might have ensued as a result of poisonous bombs poured upon English soil. That has really made everything clear. God forgot to prevent “poisonous bombs” falling, and he did what he could to cleanse the ground and, incidentally, killed corn and other foods. God did his best—late as usual.

Just in passing. Recently a priest of the St. Joseph’s Church, Brighton, was summoned for selling lottery tickets and engaging children to sell them. The magistrates found the offences proved and adjourned their decision, as they wanted to inspect a full statement of the accounts of the fund.

"THE FREETHINKER"

41, Gray's Inn Road,
London, W.C. 1.
Telephone No. Holborn 2601.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

A. R. STOKES (Englefield Green).—You are quite in error. Almost from boyhood we have been familiar with almost every argument for the existence of God, and the more we read the more certain we are on the matter. You are very angry over what you call our "jibes" at God. But as God seems unaffected by what we say we do not see why you should get so annoyed. Anyway, we are glad to know you read "The Freethinker." We have helped many one-time believers to smile and thank us for opening their eyes.

C. H. WILLIAMS.—Thanks for item of news, but we do not make a point of publishing the dishonesties of the clergy unless we have special cause for so doing. Generally speaking the Christian clergy are neither worse nor better than other groups of humans. Their besetting sin is the assumption that they are better.

J. HALLERTON.—Thanks for reminder, but we had noticed the matter and shall be writing on it in our next issue.

L. MORTIMORE.—You are mistaken. We wrote occasionally other articles in "The Freethinker" under an assumed name, but there were not many.

W. S.—For "The Freethinker," 10s.

A. R. STOKES.—We may deal with your letter later, but we should have thought that the base on which we stand with regard to our non-belief in a god will be found in both books and pamphlets at the office of this journal.

C. SWEETMAN.—Much obliged. Newspaper cuttings are always welcome, and are probably of use even though they are not used at once.

The General Secretary gratefully acknowledges donations to the "Freethinker"—L. Organ, 5s. (in memory of F. Skidmore); W. J. Gough, 3s.; J. C. Kirkman, 4s.; P. R. Barlow, 8s.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1, 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 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1, by the first post on Monday, or they will not be inserted.

SUGAR PLUMS

In memory of Charles A. Watts, founder of the Rationalist Press Association, a special service has been organised to take place at the Conway Hall on Thursday, 10th October, at 7.30 p.m. There will be a musical service in addition to speeches by well-known men.

A new edition of Chapman Cohen's "God and the Universe" now on sale. This is the third edition of a much-praised and much-criticised book. It is a general examination of Professor Julian Huxley, Sir James Jeans and others, including Professor Eddington, who contributed an article in reply to the criticism of his "Nature of the Physical World." Price, 3s. 6d.; postage,

Many of our older readers will remember the name of Henry Spence as a firm Freethinker, and who never missed an opportunity of forwarding the Freethought cause, careless of the penalty it might mean. We are glad to hear that he remains as firm as ever in his Freethought, and we take the following from an article in the "Hunt's Post," with the regret that we cannot find space to print it in full. He says:—

"... many, like myself, were taught in youth the doctrine of the fall of man. 'Of man's first disobedience and the fruit of that forbidden tree, Whose mortal taste brought death into the world and all our woe.'

"Alongside of this we were urged to live by the precepts of Jesus. I tried it. At college I was persecuted, and finally, one night, half-a-dozen of my Christian collegians hauled me out of bed, dragged me to the lavatory, and proceeded to put my head under the tap. The old Adam in me awoke, and I slashed out with all my might, with the result that two of them had to receive the doctor's attention, whilst the others suffered minor injuries.

"The following morning when I entered the day room I was welcomed as a hero. This made me think furiously, and, to cut a long story short, I finally found peace of mind and goodwill among men by becoming an evolutionist. I was converted by Matthew Arnold and Herbert Spencer.

"I can assure the Canon that I did not learn from them that this was 'the best of all possible worlds.' I learned from Arnold that 'Miracles do not happen' and from Spencer that there was 'A struggle for existence and a survival of the fittest.' This gospel of the rise of man brings hope with it, and fills one with optimism, even in 1944. For every evolutionist of Victorian times there are at least ten now during this great war."

Mr. J. V. Shortt (Preston) will close the outdoor propaganda on Merseyside by an outdoor afternoon meeting on Sunday, October 6, to be held on the bombed site, Ranelagh Street, Liverpool, at 3 p.m. In the evening Mr. J. V. Shortt will open a series of regular monthly meetings, which has been arranged by the Merseyside Branch N.S.S., to be held on the first Sunday of each month in the Stork Hotel, Queen Square, Liverpool 1, commencing at 7 p.m. The subject he has chosen will be: "The Shame of Christianity." Local Freethinkers are requested to give the Branch every assistance. Any further information required may be obtained from the Secretary, Miss A. M. Parry, 476, Mill Street, Liverpool 8.

In the Cosmo Cinema, Rose Street, Glasgow, today Mr. F. J. Corina will lecture on "Birth Control and Christianity." The arrangements are in the hands of the Glasgow Branch N.S.S. and the officials expect all members and sympathisers to make the meeting known and attend. The lecture commences at 3 p.m. Admission is free, with some Donation Tickets.

The Methodists of the Isle of Man appear to be seriously disturbed at the growing disregard of Sunday worship. It appears that in the opinion of the Manx Methodists God is at home for worship every Sunday and he is naturally upset when he finds that instead of Manxmen paying him a verbal visit on that day they are strolling about and enjoying themselves as though God did not exist. The Methodist Synod says that Sunday has always been "a different kind of day in the Island," and now people are strolling about and God sits waiting in vain for praise. Poor God! But the inhabitants appear to be quite all right.

The absurdity of religion in a would-be civilised community is most clearly exhibited where religion is on the carpet. Here is an example. At Larkhill, Wiltshire, a number of German prisoners of war are marched off to a Christian church. The choir-master and organist then thank God, after praying to God for the King in three languages, Latin, German and English—evidently all the angels are not professional linguists, and the people below hope to hit the mark with the three tongues. Of course, we may suspect that those of the prisoners will slip another prayer to God on their own. Let us hope that God doesn't get the different prayers mixed. Really, these religious arrangements make us wonder whether there is not some kind of germ that end in driving people insane.

BIBLE TRANSLATION

I.

BOOKS on the Bible and about the Bible continue to pour from the Press, and it must be confessed that many of them must supply a need of some kind, whatever Freethinkers may feel about it. There seems to be a curious fascination about the book and its contents which holds good even though they have been riddled to extinction from the point of view of authenticity and credibility. Though it is now quite out of date, "The Age of Reason" is still not only wonderfully readable, but it can hold the reader's attention to the last page, and that is true of many other books dealing with the Bible even from the orthodox side.

For myself, I must admit that I can never resist any work dealing with the translation of the Bible—how we got our various versions, who made them, of what value are they, and so on. And if there are any readers of the same mind, let me heartily recommend them to Mr. E. S. Bates' "Intertraffic, Studies in Translation" (Jonathan Cape, 1943).

Mr. Bates deals most interestingly with various phases of translation, but it is his chapter on the Bible which should appeal to all those of us who want to know exactly how the English versions of the Bible arose. What he himself "believes" I do not know, but I would be greatly astonished if he had any more belief in "inspiration" than I have. At all events, he—perhaps discreetly—says as little as possible about that, and concentrates on the English translations, at the same time making some astonishing admissions. There is, in particular, one point he makes, and that is how quickly a book on the Bible can become out of date. We are constantly making fresh discoveries, and even books published as late as 1935 can only be of general interest and are quite likely to be out of date on some special point.

The "original" tongues in which the Bible has been declared to be written are Hebrew and Greek, yet that "customary affirmation" will not "bear examination." We simply do not know in what languages the various books of the Bible were *originally* written; there is no evidence whatever that the first writers of the Old Testament wrote in Biblical Hebrew, and we do know as a fact that the present Hebrew script is no older perhaps than the first century B.C.—and it may well be later.

Mr. Bates comes to quite a number of interesting and, for the devout Christian, iconoclastic conclusions. Whatever the "Word of God" may contain, he declares, the translated Bible does not contain the "Words of God." Also "the Bible has no unity of its own. It stands for no one literature or language. The terms Hebrew, Jewish, and Israelite, all mean different things. . . . The nearest available is Jewish; but we cannot assume that the beginning of it is Jewish; and we know that the end is not." And again, "The Bible as literature is neither continuous with a country, nor synchronises with a period, nor coincides with a race. Books that are of unequal value in the eyes of those who transmitted them are put before the translator as of equal value; other books which are to be classified as akin to them, and of higher value than many of the contents of the Bible, are excluded; withheld from him as negligible." It is very fortunate for the Church that the great Christian public, Catholic and Protestant alike, are very unlikely to read this book; they would get some very unhappy moments.

The earliest English translators, like those for instance who are responsible for the so-called Wycliffe Bible, went to the Latin Vulgate for their source, never doubting perhaps that it was, though itself a version, God's Holy Word. But modern scholars know quite well that as a translation the Vulgate is faulty and tendentious. It is supposed to have been revised from the "Old Latin" version, one of the earliest translations made, but Jerome appears to have revised only portions of it, and even then we do not know for certain from which Hebrew and Greek manuscripts he made his revision. What was their value?

Nobody knows because everything is so uncertain about all these early copies of the "originals" about which we know literally nothing. To Freethinkers all this has been known for generations—it will be found, for example, in the work of Robert Taylor—but it is good to have it emphasised again in a work not ostensibly Freethought.

What Mr. Bates has to say of the Authorised Version is of particular interest, for expert on translation as he is, he has no difficulty in assessing the value not only of the earlier ones like those called the Bishop's Bible and the Geneva Version, but also the later ones like the Revised Version. Actually, the A.V. was twice "revised"—in 1629 and 1638—but it was even then received with hostility for it was well known as having been deliberately falsified in many places. It is also most interesting to note that these revisions adopted quite a number of the despised Roman Catholic Rheims version, "referred to in the preface with abuse." Besides, "the Authorised Version, as circulated to-day, is not the Authorised Version at all; not the 1611 publication; and even when reprinting purports to take place, it must be borne in mind that there were two editions in 1611, differing from each other in hundreds of instances."

What about the A.V. as being one of the "glories of Elizabethan literature?" The answer, according to Mr. Bates, is that "there is no Elizabeth literature in it." Most of its best parts was written in Henry VIII.'s reign, and the "alterations of the 1611 Committee commenced years after Elizabeth was dead and are typically Jacobean." And it should be noted that while the A.V. was based on Tyndale and Coverdale—in spite of the fact that it claimed on the title page to have been translated from the "original" languages—"scores of passages written by Tyndale which the Authorised Version rejected . . . were restored by the Revised Version."

While admitting the many excellencies contained in the A.V., it is permissible to ask, are they the product of a formed language or an unformed one, of the early 16th or the 17th centuries? "Was the English Bible," asks Mr. Bates, "its own conclusion is that 'almost all that gives the Bible its hold on people, in however modernised a form it may now be presented is due to two men, Tyndale and Coverdale.'" Both, so different in many ways from each other, were remarkable men in every way, Tyndale with the fire of fanaticism, Coverdale with the urbanity of scholarship. Tyndale was always ready to quarrel—Mr. Bates calls this trait "a strain of caddish contentiousness"—Coverdale "was always a gentleman," but both did their best for what they believed to be God's work. If we cannot agree with them here, we can at least admire them—and especially Tyndale, for his fierce devotion to the task he set out to perform. He wanted the Bible to be read and understood by the ploughboys of England, and he did his best to make an English version which would be understood by the common man. Alas, he seems to have overlooked the fact that the ploughboys of Cumberland spoke a rather different kind of English from those of Somerset and both from that of the ploughboys of London—and all three from that of a scholar like Tyndale working most of the time abroad. That is why, in the main, the English of the A.V. was never a spoken language but, so to speak, a "reverent tradition of what a 'holy' language should be.

H. CUTNER.

LOURDES "CURES"

The "Catholic Times" puts on record that 13 pilgrims to Lourdes were cured of their complaints. The number of people who went to Lourdes were 72, and we wonder why the bulk of those were not cured also. It may be that God and his angels were tired. We do not know. But we do know that medical men offer cure people from a disease they never had, but would be cured if the doctor merely told his patients that the complaints were imaginary. The Vatican well earns its title—the great lying Church.

BACON v SHAKESPEARE

"A Daniel come to judgment."
—Merchant of Venice.

THE legend that Bacon wrote Shakespeare originated at least 100 years ago. Delia Bacon, an American authoress (1811-1859), gave it currency when she wrote her "Philosophy of the Plays of Shakespeare Unfolded" in 1857, which contained a preface by the great American writer, Nathaniel Hawthorne. Delia Bacon did not originate the idea herself, but her eloquent plea for its acceptance gave her prominence which her novels did not. In fact her advocacy of the legend was so intense that she is remembered as the "half-crazed" advocate of the theory that Shakespeare's plays were written by Lord Bacon.

The subject is now a hardy perennial, and hard words have been written and said by those who maintain that Bacon wrote Shakespeare and by those who assert that Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare. The purpose of this article is to show that Shakespeare wrote Bacon or, at least, some of the works attributed to Bacon.

Bacon was skilled in law matters and became Attorney-General during the reign of James I. He wrote several works in Latin as was customary in those days. Now, Shakespeare, who knew "small Latin and less Greek" was skilled in legal matters also. In his youth he achieved notoriety as a poacher and his appearances in the courts made him conversant with legal processes. Hence he experienced no difficulty in writing such works as "Maxims of the Law" and "Reading on the Statute of Uses." His skill in the art of pleading was unrivalled for the reason mentioned. We are asked to believe that Bacon wrote a dramatic work, a masque. In fact, this was a very poor work of Shakespeare's, and the playwright was so disappointed with this effort that he foisted it on to Bacon. If the publication of these works are shown to be some few years after Shakespeare's death, it is probable that publication was delayed for some reason or other. Facilities for printing and publishing were different in those days than they are now, and delays were inevitable. The difference of a few years is unimportant to the issue in question, which is that Shakespeare wrote some of Bacon's works.

Shakespeare was poet and playwright and he was astray when he wrote on matters pertaining to science, as did Goethe in some instances many years after. The works show that he was behind the scientific knowledge of his time. He knew nothing of Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood, or of Kepler's calculations, and rejected the Copernican astronomy. His work as a playwright occupied so much of his time that he was unable to finish the review and encyclopedia of all knowledge, which was called "Instauratio Magna." But it must be allowed that he gave impetus to future scientific investigation, and his insistence on the facts that man is the servant and interpreter of nature, and that truth is not derived from authority is confirmed in many ways by the subject matter of his plays.

We have no record that Bacon had been a poacher in his youth. He passed his boyhood under the stern discipline of his mother, a zealous Calvinist. He studied law and was called to the Bar at the age of 21. Such a man could not have written "As you like it." Only a poacher could have done that. The art of poaching involves skill in hiding, double crossing of tracks, stalking, and knowledge of forest lore. These attributes are skilfully depicted in "As you like it." The actors revel in hiding from one another, stalking one another, double crossing one another's tracks, and resorting to all the subterfuges in which a poacher is so accomplished. Bacon could not have thought of these amusing diversions. Moreover, it was not in his nature to do so. Again, consider the "Merchant of Venice." Is it seriously suggested that a legally trained mind such as Bacon's could so burlesque the procedure in a court of law as is shown in this play? Bacon would have been horrified at the suggestion.

On the other hand, Shakespeare, in view of his experiences, would pen such a scene, unprecedented in legal annals, with dramatic glee. What fun at the expense of the law! Decidedly, Bacon could not have written the "Merchant of Venice."

The legal training and mind of Bacon, his ability to sift evidence and facts would not have perpetrated the blunders and anachronisms which appear in Shakespeare's works. We may be sure that no striking clock would have been introduced in "Julius Cæsar" or cannon in the reign of "King John," or printing in the time of Henry II. Bacon would not have introduced a billiard table into Cleopatra's palace, or started a ship from the gates of Milan, or given Bohemia a coast line. As a lawyer he would have been certain of his facts, and not make a mistake "in every seven lines," as Dr. Johnson said of Shakespeare. A playwright in a hurry to get a play ready for the stage may be pardoned a few errors so long as the sense, interest and dramatic appeal are not impaired. But a lawyer would not be hurried on any account, and he could never risk being tripped up.

The intention of this article was to enlarge on the assumption that Shakespeare was responsible for writing some of Bacon's works, instead much has been adduced to indicate that Bacon could not have written Shakespeare. Having voluntarily entered the maze of the Bacon-Shakespeare controversy a way out must be sought. If we examine the Baconian-Shakespearean pie closely, we find other personalities besides the two celebrities referred to. Bacon is said to have disclosed in the wondrous cipher that he wrote the plays of Greene. Henry Irving repeats the statement that Bacon, in addition to writing Shakespeare and Greene, also wrote the works of Ben Jonson, Kit Marlowe, Spenser's "Faerie Queene" and Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy." Fletcher's hand is discerned in King Henry VIII. It is possible that Queen Elizabeth was a collaborator as the cipher is supposed to reveal that Bacon was the "legitimate son of Queen Elizabeth." In the making of the pie the hand of Plutarch also is perceptible, nay, most apparent.

The history of literary forgeries and hoaxes is inexhaustible. The practice is an old one. The greatest of the early forgers was an Athenian poet. In more recent times we have Chatterton the boy poet, Ireland, who forged Shakespearean M.S.; Poe, who caused a flutter in the world of science; and Psalmanazar, the "expert" on Formosa. Dr. Johnson said that Psalmanazar was "the best man he ever knew." Umph.

Greene hated Shakespeare and referred to him as the "upstart crow." Under the pretext of collaboration, but as a hoax, he gave Shakespeare reams of Plutarch's dialogues with additions. The poor Warwickshire lad who haunted the London theatres and earned a pittance minding horses, boasted that he was a playwright. The hoax was never discovered and, alas for Greene, Shakespeare is immortalised as the greatest poet of any age and country, and poor Greene is forgotten. After this we shall not be surprised to hear of a cipher which, in the words of Henry Irving, showed that "Darwin wrote Tennyson, Dickens, Thackeray and Ainsworth."

S. GORDON HOGG.

BALDERDASH, BRUTALITY, AND THE B.B.C.

MUCH has been said and written about the B.B.C. as educator. Let me tilt at another no less worthy "windmill," the B.B.C. as entertainer.

Some years ago the intelligentsia discovered in Edward Lear a greater philosopher than Spinoza and Descartes' master in Lewis Carroll. The Marx Brothers ousted Plato as the planners of an ideal state. In short, nonsense began its reign and stories of men who put spinach on their heads because they thought it was cabbage made us roar and hold our sides with laughter. The Englishmen, Irishmen and Scotchmen jokes suffered complete eclipse for they had a point to them.

New humorists arose to meet the new appetite and the masses followed the few until bricklayers could scarcely lay trowel to mortar without some Lewis Carroll whimsy on their lips.

The first nonsense was brilliant but the aftermath proved poor reaping and finally the B.B.C. ever abreast of the rearguard of modern thought deluges us with inanity. "Itma," "Danger. Men at Work," "Ignorance is Bliss" are only a few of the calculated lunacies which come to us. Sometimes they make us laugh but more often the fun is puerile depending on weekly repetition of inane catchwords. The limits to which nonsense has been carried by the B.B.C. should disturb us. Pavlov's dog should warn us that if we are conditioned to nonsense we shall resent its opposite.

We are now told that the zany "Itma" programme compares with Swift and Rabelais as social satire, and that it sustained us through the war. The nonsense, it is claimed, took our minds off the realities of slaughter, bombing, displaced persons, queueing, black-out, and (dare we imagine) National Days of Prayer. Since the Armistice these nonsense programmes have multiplied presumably to lighten our new set of realities.

Would Germany have won if she had had her Tommy Handleys? How lucky that we invented humour here and that we do not allow it to be manufactured elsewhere except in America under licence! Here is the warning we should heed: "Hear this nonsense and you will begin to talk it, for most men like to appear humorous and, when the accepted humour is inane, inanity will pervade the whole country."

What of B.B.C. Drama? In fairness, I must record that the radio has made thousands appreciate great and beautiful plays. The production is often excellent. Why then is this skill so often devoted to ignoble ends. Very many short plays deal with violent and unhealthy themes. In the "Appointment With Fear" series excellent production was devoted on one occasion to a play about a negro whose teeth were extracted without anaesthetic and replaced by those taken from a criminal's corpse. This theme is disgusting by all but the lowest standards of taste. *Yes, here in England this was our entertainment at a time when our hands were held up in horror at the crimes of Belsen. Is it credible?*

Accept vicious brutality as your entertainment and it will soon brutalise you, and don't think that the old English cry of "It can't happen here" will save you. Sadism accepted as entertainment would in time make people ready to look upon Belsen as an act of war just as decent and justifiable as the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

Let the B.B.C. give us plays which will sustain faith in man as an animal with some nobility and dignity and let it not pollute the air by making him so frequently a sadistic maniac. We have real horrors enough without the need of inventing more. If you think man is impervious to sadistic suggestion, ask yourself if your grandfather would have believed in 1900 that 1946 would see such cruelty and misery.

You may now ask, "Well, what can we do about it?" The answer is simple: write to the B.B.C. and tell them that to men of intelligence their taste is either puerile or non-existent. The men of the B.B.C. do not like to be thought puerile. Many of them, I am told, are intelligent men who wish to see changes and they will be able to use your letters to reinforce their own internal campaigns.

LYNDON IRVING.

While the price of things is everywhere going up, it is cheering to know that at least in one instance prices are to be kept down. Thus the Minister of National Insurance has arranged that the price for pulling teeth shall not run higher than certain figures. Thus the price for one tooth being "pulled" is 5s., for two teeth 7s. 6d., for three 12s. 6d., until it reaches 25 teeth for £2. Actually the more teeth we have pulled the cheaper the "pulling" becomes. We feel sure that some economical "souls" will go the whole hog in the interests of economy.

WHAT IS A THEORETICAL CHRISTIAN?

I AM induced to put the above question by a paragraph in Mr. C. G. L. Du Cann's article, "The Best of Christians" ("The Freethinker," September 8), in which he says: "I myself am a theoretical Christian having had (as I have been many times assured) a good Christian upbringing although I do not go so extremely far as to practise Christianity any more than the rest of us do. But being a Christian, I could not fail to recognise one—the only practical working one—'of the household of Christ' whom I have ever met. He was a horse."

I am not now concerned with the success or failure of the analogy which Mr. Du Cann draws between a true Christian and a horse except to point out that the horse in question did nothing which he was not forced to do, and which was not the natural consequence of his being a horse, and to remind his eulogist that there is no virtue, Christian or other, in a compulsory act. As for the Christian qualities which Mr. Du Cann ascribes to him as humility, poverty, charity, soberness, etc., I can only suppose that the exuberance of Mr. Du Cann's fancy has carried him to the verge of nonsense. However, it is not the horse's Christianity but Mr. Du Cann's I would discuss here.

I assume that in calling himself a "theoretical Christian," Mr. Du Cann means that he accepts as truth the principles and doctrines on which the Christian religion is founded without believing in their practical application—in other words, he is a Christian in thought, not in action. If he does not mean this I confess I am at a loss to understand his use of the phrase, and if he does mean it I am none the less at a loss to conceive how there can be such a person as a "theoretical Christian."

It is plain that one cannot accept the theory of Christianity without believing in certain fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith as, that Jesus Christ is God, that he came on earth as a man to give himself as a sacrifice for the redemption of sinners, that in pursuance of his mission he performed certain miracles, that he was crucified, that he rose from the dead and ascended into Heaven, and that he shall come from thence to judge mankind. These are the principles which constitute the theory of the Christian scheme and which, as a theoretical Christian, Mr. Du Cann accepts as truth. That he does not translate his beliefs into practice makes not the least difference in his attitude towards Christianity, because, if he believes it to be true in theory he must also believe it to be true in practice. For instance. He may not pray but he must believe in prayer because he believes in Jesus who enjoined prayers. He may argue against miracles, but he must believe in Christ's flout at the Devil, but he must believe in him, because Jesus did. If he should deny all this I can only say that he is grievously mistaken in himself and that, whatever else he may be, he is certainly not a "theoretical Christian."

A. YATES.

"TELL ME THE OLD, OLD STORY!"

THIS war, like all others, has been a war fought in the name of Christianity (in spite of the fact that 75 per cent. of the native troops who took part were not Christians). Since September 3, 1939, we have been fighting a war in the name of a religion, the which BOTH sides were doing battle. And in spite of the fact that that self-same religion condemns war in no uncertain terms. From 11 a.m. on that black day until one minute past midnight on the night of May 8-9, 1945, we have been loaded with sickening propaganda inciting us to further murder and slaughter in the name of the God of Peace. Since Neville Chamberlain first told us that we were fighting for a national religion to which half the Allied nations did not belong, we have been told a thousand-thousand times by the King, by the Generals, by Admirals, Air Staff and Cabinet Minister that we were fighting

for Christian rights and all sorts of other abstractions of which none of us have any knowledge. In short, the most terrible war in history has been used as an instrument to propogate the theories of the very religion which played a large part in causing it.

God is always on the winning side. The Church doesn't say that, but all the evidence does. In 1940 whilst we had perfect weather in which to evacuate our troops from Dunkirk, that weather prevailed to allow the Germans fine flying weather in which to blitz our cities. Of course, Jehovah was still on our side, even when the visibility was so good that the Luftwaffe were bombing London from 3,000ft. In those days this was a tremendous height.

Even when God protected Hitler in the bomb plot against his life. He was still on our side. Even when the Nazi armour was crashing through the Ardennes, and the fog was so bad that no plane could get off the ground to stop the advance, He was still on our side. When the American paratroops were going through Hell at Bastogne, He was still on our side. Though He may have failed to intervene because instead of praying the Yankee Colonel said "Nuts" to Germans who asked him to surrender. It was the same at Arnhem. Had the Airborne Troops thrown down their arms, gone on their knees and begged for help, He would have intervened. The only Airborne he ever helped was a Derby winner, which like the Lord, was an outsider.

When the house-wives queued-up for bread on June 7, He let the sun beat down on them for hours. When we were attempting to show our gratitude for his constant intervention (on the wrong side) He obscured everything in a mist. Ungrateful wretch!

God appears to be able to fight for both sides, always back the loser, convince His disciples that He is on the other side, and then play a disgraceful trick on His followers and supporters when they are trying to give thanks, without being blamed by anybody. The public will blame the Air Ministry and not the Lord for the bad weather which spoilt their celebrations. The parsons will go on telling us that having won the war with the aid of the Lord we cannot win the peace without it. I wonder!

FRANCIS I. GOULD.

AUTO-DA-FE

Dedicated to His Holiness the Pope and General Franco and Co.

Almighty God looked down on this:
He heard the crackle and the hiss
Of mounting flames from faggot fire,
It soothed His "su-Deistic" ire!

Gloating hounds of God stood by
To watch their tortured victims die,
And gazing down from Heaven's Gate
God fed and fanned the fires of hate!

This ghoulsh gang of profiteers
In sin and death and blood and tears
Would, if their former power return
Still ply their trade and ban and burn!

Shall these things be? Or shall man say
"Too long, too long, have they held sway!"
Now let them pay, and pay full score
And blight this tortured earth no more!

"ICONOCLAST."

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

Report of Executive Meeting held September 26, 1946

The President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, in the Chair.
Also present: Messrs. Hornibrook, Griffiths, Seibert, Ebury, Lupton, Silvester, Horowitz, Page, Morris, Barker, Mrs. Quinton, Mrs. Grant and the Secretary.
Minutes of the previous meeting read. Financial statement presented. New members were admitted to West London, North London, Bradford Branches and to the parent Society.
The alteration of the description of the Liverpool Branch to the Merseyside Branch was confirmed. The special meeting further to discuss the Manchester motion on the Conference Agenda, fixed for October 27 in London, was endorsed.
Lecture reports and arrangements for future meetings were noted from Messrs. Brighton, Clayton, Newcastle, Birmingham, Glasgow, West London Branches.
The date of the next Executive meeting was fixed for Thursday, October 24, and the proceedings closed.

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, 4 p.m., Mr. L. Ebury. Highbury Corner, 7 p.m., Mr. L. Ebury.
West London Branch N.S.S. (Hyde Park).—Sunday, 6 p.m., Messrs. E. SAPHIN, J. HART and E. PAGE.

LONDON—INDOOR

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Tuesday, October 8, 7 p.m., Mr. S. K. RATCLIFFE: "Democracy and the Empire."
South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Sunday, 11 a.m., Mr. J. McCABE: "Applying Science to Life."

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Ranelagh Street, Liverpool, opposite Lewis's).—Sunday, 3 p.m., Mr. J. V. SHORTT (Preston).
Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barkers Pool).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m., a lecture.

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics Institute).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m., "Car Park Reminiscences," Mr. HAROLD DAY.
Glasgow Secular Society (Cosmo Cinema, Rose Street).—Sunday, 3 p.m., "Birth Control and Christianity," Mr. F. J. CORINA (Bradford).
Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Stork Hotel, Queen Square, Liverpool 1).—Sunday, 7 p.m., "The Shame of Christianity," Mr. J. V. SHORTT (Preston).

FOR SALE.—"Secret History of the Court of England" by Lady Hamilton, 1760-1830. Very scarce copy. Best offer secures this rare work. Mr. N. Charlton, 64, Sandycroft, Burnley.

MEMORIAL SERVICE

WATTS. MEMORIA MORI at CONWAY HALL, LONDON, W.C. 1
OCTOBER 10, at 7.30 p.m.
in honour of the late

CHARLES A. WATTS (d. May 15, 1946)
(Founder of the Rationalist Association)

Address by Prof. Sir Arthur KEITH, F.R.S.
Music by Dr. Ernst H. MEYER. ZORIAN QUARTET
TICKETS from R.P.A., 4, Johnson's Court, E.C.4

FOR YOUR BOOKSHELF

The books listed below should appeal to all Freethinkers, but particularly to those who have recently joined the movement. In them will be found answers to the many questions which are almost always asked by people leaving the religion to which they were brought up; and most of the books and pamphlets should certainly grace the library shelves of readers of this journal.

THE BIBLE

- THE BIBLE: WHAT IS IT WORTH?** By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 2d.; postage 1d.
- MISTAKES OF MOSES**, by Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 3d.; postage 1d.
- THE MOTHER OF GOD**, by G. W. Foote. Price 3d.; by post 4d.

CHRISTIANITY

- CHRISTIANITY—WHAT IS IT?** By Chapman Cohen. A Criticism of Christianity from a not common point of view. Price 2s.; postage 1½d.
- AN ATHEIST'S APPROACH TO CHRISTIANITY**, A Survey of Positions, by Chapman Cohen. Price 1s. 3d.; postage 1½d.
- ROME OR REASON? A Question for To-day.** By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 4d.; by post 5d.
- 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.
- PAGANISM IN CHRISTIAN FESTIVALS**, by J. M. Wheeler. Price 2s.; postage 2d.

FREETHOUGHT

- DETERMINISM OR FREEWILL?** By Chapman Cohen. Price in cloth, 2s. 8d., post free; paper cover, 2s. 2d., post free.
- HENRY HETHERINGTON**, by A. G. Barker. A Pioneer in the Freethought and Working-class Struggle of a Hundred Years Ago. Price 7d., post free.
- SPEAKING FOR MYSELF**, by Lady (Robert) Simon. Price, post free, 2s. 8d.
- CHALLENGE TO RELIGION** (a re-issue of four lectures delivered in the Secular Hall, Leicester), by Chapman Cohen. Price 1s. 3d.; postage 1½d.
- ESSAYS IN FREETHINKING**, by Chapman Cohen. First, third and fourth series, Price 2s. 6d. each; postage 2½d.
- HOW THE CHURCHES BETRAY THEIR CHRIST.** An Examination of British Christianity. By C. G. L. Du Cann. Price 9d.; postage 1d.

- A GRAMMAR OF FREETHOUGHT**, by Chapman Cohen. An outline of the philosophy of Freethinking. Price 3s. 6d.; postage 4d.
- THE FAULTS AND FAILINGS OF JESUS CHRIST**, by C. G. L. Du Cann. (Second Edition.) Price 4d.; by post 5d.
- THEISM OR ATHEISM**, by Chapman Cohen. Price 3s. 6d.; postage 2½d.
- WHAT IS RELIGION?** By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 2d.; postage 1d.
- GOD AND EVOLUTION**, by Chapman Cohen. Price 6d.; postage 1d.
- WILL YOU RISE FROM THE DEAD?** By C. G. L. Du Cann. An enquiry into the evidence of resurrection. Price 6d.; postage 1d.
- PRIMITIVE SURVIVALS IN MODERN THOUGHT**, by Chapman Cohen. Price, cloth 3s. 3d., post free.
- THE OTHER SIDE OF DEATH**, by Chapman Cohen. Price 2s. 6d.; postage 3d.
- THE MORAL LANDSLIDE.** An Inquiry into the Behaviour of Modern Youth. By F. J. Corina. Price 6d.; postage 1d.
- SHAKESPEARE AND OTHER ESSAYS**, by G. W. Foote. Price, cloth 3s.; postage 3d.
- GOD AND THE CO-OP. Will Religion Split the People's Movement?** By F. J. Corina. Price 2d.; postage 1d. 12 copies 2s. post free.
- MATERIALISM RESTATED**, by Chapman Cohen. Price 4s. 6d.; postage 2½d.
- GENERAL INFORMATION FOR FREETHINKERS.** Price 2d.; postage 1d.
- REVENUES OF RELIGION**, by Alan Handsacre. Price, cloth 3s., postage 2d.
- 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, post free, 3s. 2d.
- THOMAS PAINE AND THETFORD.** Six postcards illustrating Paine's birth-town, including a portrait of the great reformer. Price 9d., post free.
- GOD AND ME** (revised edition of "Letters to the Lord") by Chapman Cohen. Paper Cover 1s. 4d.; cloth 2s. 8d. post free.

Pamphlets for the People

By CHAPMAN COHEN

- What is the Use of Prayer? Deity and Design. Did Jesus Christ Exist? Agnosticism or . . . ? Thou Shalt not Suffer a Witch to Live. Atheism. Freethought and the Child. Christianity and Slavery. The Devil. What is Freethought? Must We have a Religion? Morality Without God. and their Makers. The Church's Fight for the Child.
- Price 2d. each. Postage 1d. each.

THE PIONEER PRESS
41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1