

THE FREETHINKER

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Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Thanks to Satan

"LET us pray for the poor Devil," suggested a sympathetic preacher after the prayer meeting had been almost exhausted. I have no record of the way in which this suggestion was received, or if it was just evaded. At any rate the thoughtfulness showed a touch of humanity that is not overworked in church and chapel services. It suggested that no one is too bad to be beyond help. Besides, if it is the aim of the Churches to save man from the clutches of the Devil, then the capture of Satan would do the trick. At any rate it suggested that no one needs help more than does the Devil. Besides, if *all* things serve a useful purpose that must apply to the very bad things as well as to the good ones. We have heard it said somewhere that the more wicked the man, the greater must be the effort to get him through the golden gates. We have it on record that the more wicked the sinner, the greater will the glory be in Heaven. Christians should try to save when they can.

Why should not Christians worship Satan? He is the real cause of the Christian plan of salvation, and the world's obligation to him is exactly the obligation we are under to Jesus. After all, humanity would never have become the high-minded, independent quality it is had not Satan induced the woman to eat of the forbidden tree. Speaking theologically, it would never have done for Adam and Eve to remain in the completely ignorant condition in which God left them. Knowledge comes from repeated efforts to overcome difficulties, and character is developed, as our religious teachers tell us, by suffering. All hail then to the Devil, the first progressive person on earth! Let us therefore pray for him, nay, let us thank him. He was humanity's first teacher.

If orthodox theology be accepted the Devil has been the source of much for which we praise humanity. Yet no one has ever suggested a monument to him, nor has an appeal for funds for that purpose come from the clergy whose very living depends upon Satan. It is true that it may be argued that every church and chapel is a monument to the Devil, and without him these monuments would never have existed. It was he who inspired the saints, to the Churches. Much as the Churches may say to the contrary, they owe their being to Satan. Heine suggested that the cause of the suffering of the Jews was that God could not forgive them for reminding the world that He was once the God of a very small tribe. And one may suspect that when Satan gets hold of the Christians he will give them an unusually hot corner because of their ingratitude for services rendered. It is little short of a scandal that

a monument to the Devil does not stand in the front of every church.

In a way the treatment of the devil reflects a characteristic feature of human nature in general. For the truth is we are all ill-appreciative of the utility of bad people and things in this world of ours. We derive pleasure and benefits from Satan, and never publicly pay acknowledgment. Consider what a tame place the world would be if everything happened as some believe it ought to. It is not merely that there would be nothing to do—which bores everybody—it is that there would be lacking the satisfaction derived from contemplating the badness of others. Of course, everybody, or nearly everybody, will disown such satisfaction, yet it is easily recognised. The strong healthy man usually feels all the stronger when he contemplates the weakness of others. The man with a good pair of lungs will draw deep breaths of satisfaction when listening to the hacking cough of a consumptive. He is not, of course, openly glad, but the sickness of others makes him feel the better for being as he is.

Again, the praise of intellect is notorious. The keen-witted man feels elated at his own mental strength. His strong wits stand out well against the follies of a fool. One's pleasure in solving a difficult puzzle is intensified by the knowledge that others have tackled the same problem—and failed. . . . The folly of some throws into relief the wisdom of others. It is also expressed in the half-pitying, "How simple some people are"; an expression of superiority put politely.

In morals, this pride of character is still more manifest. Half the pleasure of feeling good is the knowledge that others are bad. Listen to the average good Christian, say the slimy tale of the early morning B.B.C. religious broadcast, note the preacher's gratification that he is "all right with God," and one cannot but feel that if all people were suddenly to become good the early preacher would find the chief pleasure of life had been taken from him. To that class the evil in other people creates a stream of pious satisfaction. . . . The old preachers knew this when they pictured the saved souls leaning over the ramparts of heaven watching the torments of the damned. The grocer who strengthens his sense of personal perfection when the bootmaker is punished for selling bad boots, or the gratification that the bootmaker feels when a grocer is punished for adulterating sugar, or the pious way a judge may talk to one who has committed a petty robbery. Each one feels the better because he has a liking for the misbehaviour in a direction he does not move. Clearly, were it not for the contemplation of other people's faults our goodness would never stand out so brightly. Let us, therefore, be duly thankful that other people are worse than we are, or at least we think they are. And above all let us not grudge them the satisfaction of thanking God that they are not as we are.

In yet another way one may illustrate the truth that vice has its virtues and virtue has its vices. For example: What is it, or who is it, that causes most trouble in the world? Surely it is not the rogues! This cannot be, for the simple reason that the majority of people are not rogues, but good, simple-minded folk who are far more dangerous. The thief, the murderer, the dangerous brute, these represent stray specimens. We hear from the pulpit much about the wickedness of man. That may be passed by as the stock in trade of the professional preacher. They live on the alleged wickedness of man, but life would be impossible if the good were not more numerous than the bad. Nothing is more absurd than to listen to a judge lecturing a criminal as though carrying out of a burglary was the most serious evil we had to overcome. There is much more trouble caused by the people who are over-impressed by the faults of humanity. One might suppress every offence of the police court kind, and then leave untouched the more serious evils of life. There is much trouble caused by those people who are so impressed by their own goodness that the desire to fashion all in the same mould becomes an obsession. They interfere here and they legislate there, their energy is so great and their knowledge and understanding so limited that their very goodness becomes a source of evil; they are far more insidious for evil than the criminal who is marched from the dock with a judge's denunciation ringing in his ears.

Some of the greatest evils in the world, some of the most enduring wrongs to mankind have been perpetuated by "good" people, who have become bad by the very impress of their goodness. It was "good" men who framed and kept alive the Inquisition; it was good, religious men who bred the practice of torturing or drowning or burning men and women for the fictitious crime of witchcraft. And it was the founder of Methodism who said that if we gave up witchcraft we might as well give up the Bible. It was "good" people who insisted on the sacred Sunday, and so caused infinite harm to the whole community. It was good men who opposed the development of science in every direction. It is good men who form bad laws in their haste to make men free from "sin." Good religious men should go on their knees praying to God for his help in saving us from "good people." We can meet and foil the bad man with comparative ease. It is the very "good" man that is difficult to handle.

The world is not short of good men and women. It never has been, it is never likely to be. The trouble is not to find "good" people, the problem is to dodge them. There have always been crowds of that kind of article. If a man with a toothache took all the remedies that good people prescribe for him he would probably be dead in 24 hours. And if a man carried out, or tried to carry out, all the good moral advice given him, he would soon find himself in either a prison or a lunatic asylum. There is indeed only one thing that gives man the capacity to bear all the "good" that is given us from the pulpit and the platform, and that is to ignore 99 per cent. of it. The world is in far greater need of intelligent perception of humanity's problems than it is of moral fervour which often does as much evil as good. And if we were quite honest we would admit that a character with a dash of evil in it is far more attractive than listening to morals. It takes all sorts to make a world, said a shrewd Scot, and we might bear in

mind the fact that there may be evil in all things good as surely as there is good in all things evil. That is an aspect that is too often forgotten. So let us be kind to Satan. He did much good. It was he, and not the other god, who set man on the road to understanding.

There is a story of a sailor who was once chased by a bear. The sailor bolted up a tree with the bear in pursuit. The sailor found at last he could get no further. Then he prayed: "O God, you know I have never bothered you with prayers. And I am not now asking for help. But if you will not take the side of the bear I can promise you in a few minutes you will see the loveliest fight that even you have witnessed."

There seems much philosophy in that prayer.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

THE EVOLUTION TRIAL IN TENNESSEE

THE marked distinction between cultured America and its backward States was painfully illustrated by the anti-evolutionary outburst in Tennessee. Clarence Darrow in his entertaining and informative work, "The Story of My Life" (Scribners, 1932), has recorded his experiences of this remarkable case in which he played a predominant part. His fascinating autobiography is not so well known in England as it should be. It embraces a wide field and reveals the legal and humanistic career of a fine fighter on behalf of unpopular causes in which he achieved great distinction, both as advocate and as adviser.

As leading counsel for the defence of John T. Scopes who was indicted for teaching science in Tennessee, Darrow obtained world-wide fame. An agitation had for some years been conducted by American fundamentalists against the teaching of evolutionary science in the colleges and universities of the U.S. These belated bibliolators seriously assumed that the story of creation, as recorded in Genesis, was divinely inspired and therefore strictly true, both in substance and in fact. All the revolutionary scientific discoveries of the past century and a half, these benighted people discarded, thus remaining mentally in the Dark Ages.

The leader of the fundamentalists was W. J. Bryan, a prominent American politician, who was terribly concerned by Professor Leuba's assertion that over 50 per cent. of the instructors in modern American seats of learning were Agnostics. As, for several years, Bryan had been interrogating teachers regarding their orthodoxy, he was naturally disturbed by the poor success of his efforts. So he decided that children must, at all costs, be protected from infidel teaching. He studied an antiquated Commentary and stumped the States with a warning against the sinister activities of University Professors and other misguided preceptors.

Bills were presented to State legislatures forbidding the teaching of evolution in schools supported by public grants, and Kentucky negated this proposal by one vote only. But two notoriously obscurantist States, Mississippi and Tennessee, passed the measure with overwhelming majorities. Tennessee's Governor was opposed to the measure, but lacked courage to veto it, while dismissing it as of no consequence.

Although the schools of these backward States taught the truths of modern astronomy, which demonstrated the insignificance of our globe in relation to the sun and giant planets, verities entirely at variance with Biblical cosmology, this contradiction was ignored. Consequently, Dayton, an obscure town in Tennessee, obtained widespread notoriety through the prosecution of Scopes, a studious and courageous teacher in Dayton's high school, for the crime of instructing his pupils in scientific conclusions concerning man and his animal descent. So Scopes was arrested and charged with this heinous offence. An able

attorney was appointed to conduct the defence, and the Civil Liberties Union of New York provided financial aid.

When Darrow ascertained that Bryan was to assist the prosecution, he at once decided to enter the fray. He fully realised the danger arising from this attack on science by a well-organised ignorant fanaticism. Accompanied by other legal experts, Darrow prepared to participate in the impending struggle. Thus, with Darrow and Bryan in conflict in Court, the case aroused intense interest throughout America and the civilised world generally.

The Press gave the case special prominence, but usually presented it as farcical in character. Bryan averred that he was "not so much interested in the age of the rocks as in the Rock of Ages." He thus became the idol of all the nit-wits of the day. His fundamentalist addresses were deliriously applauded in all the tents and chapels in which he spoke to overflowing audiences.

Bryan was almost as ignorant as his supporters of the immense antiquity of our earth, and he had probably never read a biological text book in his life. Nor was he acquainted with the monuments of old-time Egypt, which date back 7,000 years. On the other hand, Darrow from boyhood's days had been well versed in the evolutionary writings of Darwin, Spencer, Huxley, Tylor, Lecky, Draper, Winwood Reade, Lyell, and other modern humanists.

When Bryan arrived in Dayton the populace acclaimed him as a deliverer from sin. The Press reporters besieged him for "copy," but all he said in reply was that the trial would initiate a fight to the death.

It was midsummer, and the weather was tropical with the thermometer approaching blood heat. Still, even in Bible-ridden Tennessee, Darrow found faithful and obliging friends to welcome and accommodate him and his colleagues with all their domestic requirements. And despite the fact that Dayton was adorned with banners inviting the people to "Come to Jesus," "Read the Bible daily," and other pious appeals, there was no mob rowdiness to enliven the proceedings.

In sweltering weather in Dayton, the Scopes Case came before the Court, and a special grand jury was called to indict the impious defendant. Other towns in Tennessee envied the prominence conferred on Dayton by the trial. But Judge Roulton favoured Dayton, where he himself could try the case, in which a youth of twenty-one would be prosecuted for the shameful offence of inculcating the demonstrable truths of science, while he, as judge, might reap the honour and glory of a defender of the faith against aggressive unbelief.

Still, even if the culprit was found guilty, no greater penalty could be imposed than 100 dollars fine. This alone serves to indicate the ludicrous character of the trial, but behind this lurked the ominous threat to the freedom of thought and expression.

The trial commenced when the Judge seated himself beneath an immense sign inscribed: "Read Your Bible Daily." Two policemen fanned the perspiring Judge with palm leaves to cool him and drive away the flies. Bryan was so scantily attired that it is suggested that if he had detected a girl so slightly arrayed he would have considered her character no longer doubtful. He also carried an enormous palm leaf to temper the heat waves and scatter the flies.

The conflict between science and superstition at Dayton created great interest and people flocked from far distant places to witness this amazing farce. Also, tents were erected to shelter the various pious cranks who conducted religious services—many of them Corybantian—in which the devilry of Darwin and his dupes was denounced. Inflamed with fanaticism, the crowd turned the Court surroundings into pandemonium.

Contrary to all precedent, the Judge called upon Brother Twitchell to open the proceedings with prayer. So, after the adjournment, Darrow protested to the Judge against this anomaly, urging that the trial was not a religious ceremony but a trial in a law court. Moreover, it seemed utterly unfair to introduce

pious supplication in a case of a distinctly religious character. The lawyers on the other side pretended to be shocked at this protest against prayer, which surely would occasion no harm. Again, a later public protest in Court was ignored, while the pious spectators appeared to expect a thunderbolt to crash and annihilate the lawyers engaged in the defence.

Darrow opened his case aggressively but no very serious arguments were advanced as the counsel for the defence were aware that Bryan had prepared an emotional oration, concerning the Prince of Peace and other sentimental platitudes, with which he intended to thrill his contemporaries, copies of which were already prepared for the Press. This speech, however, was never delivered, as the defence, by refraining from any closing contentions, thus prevented Bryan's projected oration.

It was all too obvious that no Dayton jury would ever acquit Scopes. Still, certain technical details had to be decided before this travesty of a trial proceeded. The provisions of the statute, and an accepted definition of the words, "religion" and "evolution" must be determined. So, leading men of science were consulted for this purpose. Bryan, on his part, declared that he would produce witnesses who would prove that current science was antagonistic to religion, but for some unexplained reason, these vaunted witnesses failed to appear.

(To be concluded) T. F. PALMER.

WAYFARER'S FAITH

HOW utterly incalculable is our debt to the Pioneers? How much easier, indeed how comparatively innocuous is the voice of the heretic these days when one considers the trials and persecution of those who trod the road even 50 years ago?

I always recall H. G. Wells' graphic revelation in one of his early books in which he found himself, I believe it was in Portsmouth, at last able to accept the fact that the sermon he had been listening to was nothing but the spoutings of misguided nonsense from an impressive pulpit, and all the Churches which reared their spires to Heaven in the town were but monuments to a mere *idea*—an outworn idea, seen at last as a gigantic primitive error, a relic of the childhood of the Race. Yet had it not been for those who blazed the trail, I wonder how many of us of the rank and file would have dared even yet to lift our voices in the cause? I should not have been amongst them. Carrying with me what Chapman Cohen describes as "The Ghost of a God" the courage even yet I find necessary to realise that York Minster, and all that goes to make up the life of a Cathedral City is naught but the work of man and man alone, is almost beyond me at times. And that after 20 years. For my "Faith" is weak. And it seems hardly likely that during the years that remain, I shall ever achieve that enviable subconscious certainty which is becoming common with youth. That clear cut and confident attitude which brought from a young girl the other day the remark that: "It seems incredible that any sane person could ever have entertained the idea of a God." But that may be just a little unfair. She was brought up as a Freethinker, and carries with her an unclouded and unspoiled inner tradition denied those of us who had an orthodox training. For her there is no half felt conscience, pathetically coloured by the haunting and bitter sweet memories of beloved parents, acting in loving error and no longer there to show what one feels would be their pain.

I have warned my relatives that in me they may well yet achieve the satisfaction of a final repentance. For if in the last hours I am poisoned by some toxemia so common in fatal illness, so that the subconscious becomes predominant, there can be no guarantee that reason will hold out long enough. Long enough, I hope nevertheless, for me to warn them, in seeking afterwards for what I have been, to recall only what was said and what was written in the daylight of health and strength.

J. STURGE-WHITING.

ACID DROPS

According to the English Catholic press, "Austrian children have lost the idea of God." It is explained that "during the years of suppression the idea of God and His sacred law" has been removed from "the hearts of the young." We can quite understand this, but why, in the name of common decency and even personal interest, did not God take a hand in preventing children from being so ill-treated? Consider the effect it would have had if and when Hitlerism taught children, as it did, some fire from heaven had fallen on those who so ill-treated children. Self-interest might have urged God to something that was unmistakably God's own job. Consider the constant way in which Churchill kept himself in the limelight. No one complained, rather they were pleased, and he had some ground for expecting praise. But God does nothing until what he does is not worth anything. If Churchill had sat silent in his office, saying and doing nothing, he would have been out of office in a week.

Somewhere in the wilds of Colchester there is a religious "Brains Trust." It appears to be as valuable as the London one, just as much and no more. One of the questions asked was whether we should be able to recognise each other in heaven. One reply was that the artist's picture of people in heaven was wrong (how did he know?), "our bodies will be glorified" and "the wearing of shirts and trousers" is quite wrong. But surely the men and women angels will not be floating about naked! If they are we can appreciate the desire of parsons to get there. And what is the difference between a glorified pair of trousers and the kind we get from a tailor?

For some reason or the other (or perhaps it is not reason at all but just bad luck for Birmingham) that city has been invaded by one of the typical wandering Christian self-ordained preachers from the U.S.A. We have had the type before and it has not changed a bit. This pal of the Lord, for he knows all about him, says that he went to work at 14 and was one of the black sheep of the place for some time. So he received a message from someone who "yanked" him out of the factory, and put him in the preaching place. So he has come to Birmingham to see what he can do there. Well, if he does as well, financially, as other preachers have done he will take what comes as evidence of God's interest in him. If he does not—well, there are a lot of places in England which may suit him better.

This American invader is sure of one thing—probably God told him, for he has the habit of forcing into his service some curious odds and ends—that God will look after him and if Birmingham does not come up to "scratch" success will be waiting for him at some other town or city. One message he brings—direct from God—is that he (God) is tired of the result of the work of appointed priests, so, says this invader, God is trying to see what can be done by laymen. If it will soothe God we can assure him that the laymen are really no better than the ordained preachers. The game is getting played out.

We are glad to see that the "Schoolmaster" has openly declared that it is time the B.B.C. allowed full and frank discussion of religion. Well, we have been pegging away ever since the B.B.C. came into being. We are not asking for credit to be paid where it is not due, it is enough that we have set the ball rolling, and kept doing it.

The following is from a recent issue of the "Leader Magazine," Rome: A photograph of Adolf Hitler—partly disguised with inked-in moustaches and spade beard—Eva Braun his mistress, and two little German girls, has appeared on a circular asking for subscriptions for holy works. Why? This is a question which is causing the Roman Catholic church some embarrassment.

Of course those responsible might plead that they were not using it for political purposes, but it also indicates the sympathies of the Roman Church when Hitler and Co. looked like controlling the whole of Europe.

The Rev. Prebendary Rural Dean of Westminster is, along with many of his fellows, very much concerned with the future of religion in general and Christianity in particular. He complains that the number of recruits are few and some of the clergy receive inadequate retiring fees. We sympathise with the last point, and would be willing to give the retiring clergyman more—provided that no other clergyman would take the place of the retiring servant of the Lord. But with the priesthood the fewer the people who want them the more the Church leaders aim at increasing their numbers. And that is not common sense. But the Prebendary takes this falling off of believers in Christianity as evidence that there is an increased demand for more churches. On that line, and in view of the rapid falling off of churchgoers, it would seem that every priest will have a separate church all to himself.

The name of Malta was often in the ears of the public as connected with the way in which the people withstood the German and Italian assaults. But in some things the people, and its leaders, appear to be living in the Middle Ages. They are very religious, when they are religious, and deny to others that liberty of which so much was made. Courage—physical courage—which is much commoner than most people imagine, is to be found among the people of Malta, but its intellectual courage appears to be at rather low point. In support of what we have said we give this from "The Times of Malta," for August 22:—

"Joseph Farrugia, in court before Magistrate J. Carina Colomo, was charged with contravening Section 28 of Chapter 85 of the laws of Malta by dissemination by post of anti-religious books. Farrugia was found guilty and sentenced to 15 days' imprisonment, and the court ordered the burning of the books."

It is quite clear that the laws of Malta fully understand the meaning of Freedom—that is, Christian freedom. We also know full well what kind of freedom we should have in this country if a large section of the pious had their way.

We lay no claims to be musical critics. We have just that liking of music that most folk have, and there we stop. But we do think it is time that the national anthem was scratched. It is mainly the praise of a king, or queen, whether they are worth the praise or not. Its main cry is "God save the king," and, as Byron said, "It is poor economy to save the like." In contrast one would offer something in the shape of the French national song, which is always stirring. But to appreciate it fully one needs to have it played by a first class French band. We have seen the tears coming to the eyes of men when it was played. We have only seen people look bored when they stood to "God save the king." With the French anthem we can appreciate Carlyle's declaration that the French song makes men fearless of death, despots and the devil.

We were reminded of this when we saw, at the recent visit of the King to St. Paul's, part of our national anthem had been altered from:—

Scatter our enemies
And make them fall;
Confound their politics,
Frustrate their knavish tricks,
God save us all.

This was a very bold and direct advice to God to look after "US" and never mind the others. As an English God he must look after English people and our allies—for the time being.

But it may be that because there has been enough killing for the time being advice to heaven—God help us and damn the others—has lost some of its attractiveness. At all events when God came to listen to praise of himself, instead of his usual "Knocked 'em in the Old Kent Road," what he got was:—

From shore to shore
Lord make the nations see
That men should brothers be,
And form one family
The world o'er.

In quality that is not better than the one discarded, although it is a little more decent. Perhaps—at the advice of Mr. Churchill—God has been reminded that this broadening of God's concern for his children, as a whole, is only so long as we do not find ourselves at war again.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

S. H. WILLIAMS.—Thanks for sending us the leaflet concerning the information that Jesus died and was buried in India. We do not believe there is anything in it worth bothering about. The whole story of Jesus is, in our opinion, just a presentation of an ancient superstition. The whole story can be found in ancient Egyptian mythology. We are pleased to hear from one who has read the "Freethinker" for so many years.

F. BRADOCK.—We had to drop most of the copies that were given free to public libraries and institutions owing to the paper shortage. But we hope very soon to be in a position—with regard to paper—to return to the practice. It will interest many to know that librarians found that "The Freethinker" was always in demand.

T. WILLIAMSON.—You are mixing up two distinct things. "Good conduct" is not something that is invented, it is something that grows and is practised long before it is understood. A female animal and a female human do not need to *understand* what they are doing when they hang on to their young, they simply hang on. The lower animals know not for what they do it. Neither, for that matter, does the human. But it is the quality of the human to realise and appreciate why it is done.

W. E. KLEIN.—Received and will appear as *early* as possible.

E. HARTLAND.—We hardly know what we can say with regard to question, other than your study of philosophy will not be complete if you pass by Schopenhauer. The reading should be done by *yourself*. In nine cases out of ten it is dangerous to take someone else's version. In fact a great many who write about famous philosophers have never paid them the compliment of making their personal acquaintance. Generally when a man sets out to tell you exactly what some dead and great man meant to say, the best things are usually left out and the poorer parts given undue prominence.

MR. E. CHINNERY, MR. W. GRANT, MR. J. McMANUS, MR. R. MASON.—Thanks for newspaper cuttings.

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You "The Freethinker."—Mr. A. George, £2 1s. 6d.; Mr. C. McRobert, £2 3s.

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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

We are pleased to say that "God and the Universe," the reprint of the Editor's criticism of Professors Huxley, Jeans, Eddington and Eddington can now be had. The reply to Prof. Eddington is a retort of some length, with a further reply by Mr. Cohen. The book is selling well, and we note it because it has just been issued in a thick tastefully paper-covered edition at 6s. 6d. plus postage, 7s. 6d. The book shows the author at his best.

We take the following from a recent copy of the "Daily Worker":—

"An article in the 'Kingdom Herald' headed 'Is Adolf Hitler living?' puts the view that Hitler was 'the God-appointed ruler with a rod of iron' of the Book of Revelation.

"It further avers that 'the divine spirit of Jesus Christ was housed' in Hitler's body and that 'Adolf Hitler was the Christ chosen of God to judge the world.'

"Moreover, 'Hitler can never die because the spirit of Christ is eternal.'

"Well may you be incredulous, but we have among us people who write this stuff—and print it."

We have always insisted since "Nazism" made its appearance that in the matter of fundamental qualities Hitlerism is not very far removed from the Roman Catholic Church. The single ruler, appointed by God, and all the rest follows closely the morals and social rules declared. It must be remembered that Hitler claimed that he was an agent of God. And nearly always messengers, or agents, from God spell trouble.

Who is it that denies that we are a civilised, educated people? We have the "Brains Trust" of the B.B.C. and we have our daily newspapers that flash items of news that are of first-rate quality. For example, there is the "Daily Express," which solemnly publishes the news, without comment, that the "Stoke City football team lost its black cat which always travelled with it, and so lost the first game this season." It was all the cat's fault.

Manchester Freethinkers are reminded that another meeting in the Chorlton Town Hall, All Saints, takes place to-day. The speaker will be Mr. R. H. Rosetti, and his subject is "Do We Live When We Die?" It is one in the syllabus of lectures arranged by the local branch N.S.S. and begins at 3 p.m. Besides the lecture there is the renewal of old acquaintances, the making of new ones and the general strengthening of the branch.

Mr. J. Clayton who is well known on the N.S.S. platform will lecture for the Leicester Secular Society in the Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, this evening at 6-30, on "An Atheist Seeks the Spirits." We wish him every success in his quest and that he will be assisted by a large audience. Our Leicester Secular friends have put together a very attractive syllabus and deserve all the support the mentally alert in the area can give.

The degree to which our leaders—religious and lay—protest against the use of the atomic bomb may well be taken as a measure of the lumbag that penetrates our normal life. In war time there are numerous ways in which we may kill one another. There is killing by shooting, or stabbing, or starving into submission. The more we kill, and the more rapidly we kill, the better. It brings the enemy to his knees. What puzzles us is in what sense dropping an atomic bomb is essentially different from the ordinary and recognised methods, of stabbing, shooting, or starving an enemy into submission. It looks to us as an unconscious admission that war is always dangerous to anyone and anywhere, and that when the atomic bomb gets properly distributed even a "small enemy" may meet a large one on something like level grounds.

We cannot concur in the Nuremberg decision that Goering had poison in his possession when he was arrested. But how, in the name of all that is sensible, is that arrived at. Simply, that the authorities could not discover how he got it. To have said that and be done with it would have been honest. To repeat so ridiculous an explanation would be an insult if it was offered to a wooden image.

There is no denying that the leaders of the Church are at their wits' end to find some attraction that will bring a reasonable body of people to church. But the latest dodge is that adopted by the Rev. R. Hogg of the "High Church" of Dundee. He offers a "nice cup of tea" to all who come to Church on Sundays. That may attract some, but a "nip" of whisky with a "whiff" thrown in would be more certain in its attractiveness.

"THE TRUE WORD"

II.

"THE TRUE WORD."—BOOK FOUR.

In Book Four Celsus sums up and concludes his argument, and comes to his real reason for writing his polemic. The Christians, believing the Pagan gods to be demons, and the worship of the Emperors blasphemy, will have nothing to do with public affairs. They refuse either to take part in public affairs in peace time, or to fight for the Empire in times of war like the present. But such an attitude is, in the first place, ridiculous, for the worship of the Emperor, who maintains public order, is merely a civil custom, and is, as such, quite legitimate. Moreover, if the Christian god is really all-powerful why does he not give the world to the Jews and Christians, instead of making the Jews a race of homeless outcasts without a foot of land they can call their own, whilst the constant fear of persecution drives the Christians into perpetual hiding. (No doubt, an allusion to the underground catacombs where the persecuted Christians held subterranean services).

And not only is the Christian refusal to serve the State stupid, but it is fraught with danger to the future of the Roman Empire and of the classical civilisation itself. And here we will allow Celsus to speak for himself, since he has reserved his strongest and most urgent argument for his peroration. (Our translation from M. Rougier's reconstituted text.)

"And suppose that you have to swear by the ruler of the Empire. There is no harm in that. For supreme power has been given him, and it is thanks to his power that you enjoy the blessings of civilised society. Let us recall that ancient saying: 'There must be but one single monarch, him to whom the son of the artful Saturn (i.e., Jupiter—F. A. R.) has entrusted supreme power.'

"If you try to break down this tradition then the Emperor will have the right to punish you; for if everyone acted like you, the Emperor would be left deserted and alone, and the world would become the helpless prey of the most ferocious and primitive barbarians. And then soon there would be no trace left of your beautiful religion, and what would become of the glory of the true wisdom among men?" (cp. ut supra—pp. 427-8.)

And Celsus concludes the "True Word" by an appeal to any patriotism that may survive in the breasts of "the third race" (as the Christians styled themselves.)

"Support the Emperor with all your strength, assist him in the defence of civilisation, actually fight, if the current circumstances require such action; assist him in leading his armies, and, to do your duty, stop boycotting your civil duties and your military service; shoulder your share of the public service, when called on, for the preservation of society ('des lois') and for the sake of tradition" (piété). (cp. p. 429.)

Such was the remarkable conclusion of a remarkable book. The appeal of a public-spirited Roman patriot and far-sighted thinker against the already approaching onrush of that terrible epoch of social chaos and disintegration, the so-called era of "the migration of the (German) nations," of Alaric, Attila, Genseric, Hengist and Horsa, and the rest of the barbaric crew who converted "the Glory that was Greece and the Grandeur that was Rome," into a huge slum in the centuries that immediately succeeded the epoch of Celsus.

And, we may add, his eloquent concluding appeal to the Christians to join with their Pagan compatriots in facing the barbarian menace, fell upon deaf ears. In his reply, 70 years later, when, incidentally, the barbaric danger had become much more threatening (the Goths sacked Athens in Origen's lifetime), all that the Christian Father could reply to Celsus' impassioned appeal, was that Christians, whilst refusing military service, did help the Emperor—by their prayers! However, Origen brought off a lucky guess when he predicted that the barbarian invasions would not destroy Christianity, but, contrarily, would make it

the sole religion of the Empire. For, by a series of most improbable contingencies, this was what eventually came to pass. Indeed, it is well known that the coming of the "Dark Ages," first foretold by Celsus, actually made the fortunes of the Christian Church by freeing it from the restraints imposed upon its theocracy by the Imperial power. Here, History sided with Origen as against Celsus! (N.B.—Celsus was also proven wrong eventually in his concluding prediction that the numerous races who made up the Empire would never accept a single common creed.)

Undoubtedly, the "True Word" was a very remarkable book—the work of a passionately sincere champion of the classical way of life, and a man of outstanding critical ability. From the fact that no Christian writer before Origen refers to it one could infer, as does M. Rougier, that the book "fell flat." On the other hand, it was still read 70 years later, and the Christian controversialists may well have steered clear of so formidable an opponent. Origen, who was evidently impressed by his dead opponent's ability, clearly did not relish his enforced job, and is, throughout, more painstaking than really convincing. (Would he really have taken so much trouble with an unknown book long out of circulation? It hardly seems likely. In such a case, it were best to let sleeping dogs lie!) In fact, we may say that, until modern research took up the task in the age of Voltaire, Christianity had probably never faced a keener attack than was that of the second century Pagan author of "The True Word."

The remaining anti-Christian apologetics need not detain us, since the subsequent literary censorship of the Church, which had 1,200 years (c. A.D. 400-1600) unbroken rule in which to achieve its task, has left us only with the barest fragments (as and when cited by Christian authors) upon which to go. Again, a modern parallel would be a 1,200 years' dictatorship of the Gestapo following upon a Hitler victory—how much Socialist, Rationalist or Pacifist literature would, in such a case, have survived?

With regard to the later anti-Christian literature in antiquity we learn from St. Jerome that Porphyry (who wrote in Sicily about A.D. 270), the greatest of Celsus' successors, analysed the Old Testament Book of Daniel on modern lines of scientific criticism, as an *historical* (and not a prophetic) work of the era of Antiochus Epiphanes (164 B.C.), a critical feat not again repeated until the 19th century. And we have still extant a fine description to which rationalists will say amen, of the services rendered to civilisation by the classical Greeks, from the pen of the ill-fated Emperor Julian, the last militant champion of Paganism. Whilst from Herodotus, a Roman official and disciple of Porphyry comes, via the usual Christian sources, the interesting information that Christ was the leader of 900 "robbers" (i.e., rebels?) and was crucified as such. If it could be proved that such information came from the government archives, and was not merely hearsay, it would be a valuable piece of historical information proving, at least, the "historicity" of Jesus.

However, the above represent merely chance fragments of a formidable literature. In reviewing this literature we must always bear in mind that these Pagan apologists were perhaps even less representative of popular paganism than their Christian opposite numbers were of popular Christianity. The lofty monotheism of Porphyry, the acute rationalism of Celsus, can have had but little relation to the gross absurdities of popular pagan polytheism. In fact, one can say that, in so far as this literature was pagan, it was too primitive to succeed, and in so far as it was genuinely rationalistic it was too advanced. For reason requires a rational audience! And Celsus and his successors addressed themselves to a disintegrating servile civilisation made up chiefly of slaves and illiterate paupers. On such an audience reason was wasted. Hence, "The True Word" and its successors were followed, not by an Age of Reason, but by the "Age of Faith." There is here an impressive warning for our modern civilisation.

F. A. RIDLEY.

DON'T BE A SNOWBALL MAN

ONE of the most interesting fields of modern psychology is that dealing with belief, and the discoveries of the psychologist in this connection have been applied to advertising, politics and in most fields of human endeavour. A vast number of factors are involved in influencing our beliefs; it is part of the craft of the advertiser and other propagandists to make use of these factors.

The act of believing is so automatic that we do not realise how many things influence us in our decisions; how the things that we believe influence us in our choice of what we consider for belief. Foremost among these cardinal beliefs are those that we are born into, for it is easy to realise that we are largely dependent on where we are born for what we believe. Speaking generally, the average Englishman usually credits from an early age an entirely different system of basic assumptions from those of most Irishmen; and the Russian boy will see the world from a very different belief-angle from that of an American child. This is obvious, but there are many not-so-obvious factors striving to pull us in a certain direction, and some of these are at least as potent as of our nationality, race and early environment. The thing to remember about this is that what we *do* believe decides in most people what we *will* believe. As the seeds have been sown, so we will usually reap.

A better awareness of this fact can often help us considerably along the road to the truth when we are studying important problems. We can see things only in terms of what we have already seen; we interpret our future experiences in the language of past experiences. Our corpus of beliefs is in fact like a rolling snowball; we are born into a certain environment and this infuses us with certain ideas; as we go through life, if we are not taught to think properly, then we automatically credit those things that seem to bear out what we have believed before. Propaganda is aimed at resonating with what we believe in such a manner as to make something else, often contradictory, seem credible.

The great and obvious difficulty is to find some standard of truth by which we can judge things, and the man who sincerely wishes to believe the truth is likely to be more than a little bewildered. What, I believe, is the best advice that can be offered on this question, that has tortured the minds of men from time immemorial, is the asking of intelligent questions—questions directed at ourselves. This may seem a rather empty and negative attitude, but I believe it to be the best one for a person that wants the truth.

In most controversial provinces of thought it is often interesting to place yourself in the other person's position and ask questions; this can be done with advantage in a personal quarrel. Such an experience tends to result in an increase of thoughtfulness and a modification of our own attitude. It is so easy to see the fallacies in the other person's argument; it is so tragically difficult to see the discrepancies in our own.

If we do not pause in our thought-train to ask questions occasionally then the core of our assumptions, those cardinal beliefs that form the nucleus of our arguments run downhill like snowball, gathering in volume, until the vast body makes it nearly impossible for us to regard the nucleus critically. If a person's ideas annoy us it is surely to our advantage to try to find out what it is about them that irritates us and why they should do so. Some very great men have reversed their whole attitude by persistently and courageously asking themselves questions.

E. G. GORDON.

THE MOTHER OF GOD, by G. W. Foote. Price 3d.; by post 4d.

ROME OR REASON? A Question for To-day. By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 4d.; by post 5d.

OBITUARY

JOHN JAMISON.

We regret to announce the death of John Jamison which has taken place in his 64th year. A reader of "The Freethinker" for many years he shaped his life in accordance with his Freethought principles which he retained till the end. In a quiet modest way he did what he could to further the movement and to spread the opinions he held.

In accordance with his wish for cremation the ceremony was carried out at Streatham Park Crematorium, London, on October 30, where before a gathering of near relatives a Secular Service was read by the General Secretary N.S.S. R. H. R.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

THE adjourned meeting of the Annual Conference was held in the Holborn Hall, London, on October 27. There was a very good attendance of members. The discussion concerning the advisability of creating a vice-president, with a view to lightening the burden of the President, was the essential matter before the meeting. The President said that at this point he felt he could help the meeting by clearing away misunderstandings. It had been assumed, apparently, that he was in very bad health, and overworked. That idea was without justification. The bulk of the work which falls to the lot of the President is in connection with the business side of The Pioneer Press and "The Freethinker." So far as the N.S.S. is concerned his duty consists mainly in advising on legal and other matters. And in any case it would be useless to adopt, as suggested, someone who lived 200 miles from London. He had never kept anything from the Executive, what he knows the Executive knows; he took the members into his confidence and had always worked with the General Secretary. There would be no objection to creating vice-presidents as a mark of respect for those who have been in the Society for a sufficiently lengthy term to merit it. With regard to the relations of Headquarters and the Branches, it may be said that more money had been donated to the Branches than ever before, and the expenditure is increasing. There was a lengthy discussion, with question and answer, and the meeting ended.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—12 noon: Mr. L. Ebury.

LONDON—INDOOR

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, November 12, 7 p.m.: "The High Cost of Dying During 100,000 Years." Prof. V. GORDON CHILDS.
South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—11 a.m.: "The Individual and the State in 18th Century France," Dr. KENNETH URWIN, B.A., D.Litt.
West London Branch N.S.S. (The National Trade Union Club, 61, Newport St., W.C.1).—6-30 p.m.: "Religion in the Services," Major DRAPER.

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barkers Pool).—7-30 p.m.: A lecture.

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics' Institute).—6-30 p.m.: "Religion and Money," Mr. J. G. DODGSON.
Burnley Esperanto Society (Lecture Room, Mechanics' Institute, Burnley).—Tuesday, November 12, at 8-30 p.m.: "La Postmorta Vivo." Freethought lecture in Esperanto by Mr. J. CLAYTON.
Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—6-30 p.m.: "An Atheist Seeks the Spirits," Mr. J. CLAYTON.
Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Chorlton Town Hall, All Saints).—3 p.m.: "Do We Live When We Die?" Mr. R. H. ROSETTI, General Secretary, N.S.S.
Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Fitzwilliam Room, Grand Hotel, Sheffield).—7-30 p.m.: "Christianity and the Birth Rate," Mr. F. G. CORUSA (Bradford).

"WHEN SNAKE BITES PARSON!"

IN reference to Mr. W. H. Wood's article which appeared in "The Freethinker" recently relating how a Minister of God voluntarily allowed himself to be bitten by a venomous snake in order to demonstrate his "Faith" in the Lord, stating that no harm would befall him, Mr. Wood perhaps would be interested to know that this religious fanaticism is quite common in America.

In a recent issue of the New York "Freethinker," Mr. William T. Sherman Dix tells of a similar occurrence in an article under the title of, "A Sermon on the Snake—at a Safe Distance": "And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."—Mark 17-18: xvi. This is the faithful's Bible authority to handle deadly snakes" (the writer states).

While it cannot be proved that Mark or any other particular person wrote the book in the New Testament bearing his name, even the higher ups in Christendom know and have admitted long ago that the above quoted passages from Mark are forgeries. Indeed the original text of Mark has been preserved and is now a cherished possession of the Holy See in Rome. This text, as every student of Freethought knows, does not contain the four forged verses appearing at the end of Mark's gospel, which have never been struck from the English translations of the Bible.

I hold Christian church bigwigs (continues Mr. Dix) responsible for the recent tragic death of the Reverend Lewis Ford, snake cultist, of Chattanooga, Tenn., and for the deaths of other fanatical Christian snake handlers. According to the Associated Press, the faithful Reverend Mr. Ford reached into a box to bring up a hardy rattler to illustrate better one of his rousing sermons and was bitten by the deadly viper, which bite soon resulted in his death.

Since the high levels of the Christian Church admit the snake doctrine to be a downright forgery, why haven't they made at least some effort to prevent these suicidal snake rites by these poor ignorant people? Why do they not take steps to have these murderous passages struck from the Bible? The answer is that they are afraid to; the church gathers its strength from the weak and the superstitious.

The repudiation of these particular passages, preachers fear, would greatly weaken the authority of the entire book which they preach to be the "inspired word of God." It might result in some very searching inquiries on the part of the faithful. The dispensers of "truth," therefore, are accessories before, as well as after, the fact.

Snake handling is common among ignorant sects in a number of primitive localities. The State of Virginia (states Mr. Dix) contemplates the enactment of a law against it in that State. Leading church officials, however, indicate opposition to any such law upon the grounds that the law would "suppress religious freedom" as guaranteed by the Federal Constitution, and always believe that the U.S. Supreme Court would be compelled to decide in favour of the snake cultist. Thus would the great money-making church industry continue to send the ignorant faithful to their early graves—through the poisonous fangs of the rattlesnake—to maintain its autocratic position as the exclusive agency of "truth."

Without a doubt the Reverend Mr. Ford was sincere in his belief that he wouldn't be harmed by the serpent. Others of the snake handling fraternity, however, are known to be fakers. Mountaineers for a long time have known the art of "Milking the snake." It is very simple. The snake is either pinned down to the ground with a long pole or is confined in a wire cage at a safe distance from the "milkman" who prods the snake with

a long object such as a fishing rod. The reptile is thus made to strike over and over again until finally all of its poison has been ejected, and several weeks are required for nature to replenish the snake's supply of lethal fluid, and then, to do so, he must have the freedom of the wilds to acquire the poison. Obviously, if the snake is given this treatment an hour or so before the start of the camp meeting his handlers take no risk.

A doubtful sinner, once attending a snake cult service and observing that none of the faithful were injured by the bites, challenged the assembly to follow Mark's gospel to the letter by drinking from a bottle of strychnine which he provided. There were no takers.

J. HUMPHREY.

BOUQUETS OR BRICKS!

There was a day when England held her breath.
The British Army—driven to the sea
By Nazi might—stood waiting patiently
For rescue, massed on Dunkirk's sands of death.
T'was early summer and no reason why
The sea should not be calm, with sunny sky.

It was; and thousands of small boats put out
And brought those gallant heroes safely home.
Thanks to the weather? But *who* sent it? Come!
If we be Christians let's prove ourselves devout
And render thanks to Him who calms the seas—
Or raises storms—or anything to please!

The Church rose nobly from its tired sleep
And seized with palsied hands this piece of fat.
A Miracle! Praise God! Thank *Him* for that!
He stilled the winds and smoothed the waters deep!
And ev'ry simple soul on bended knee
Believed it true. O Man's Mentality!

Then dawned another day. Our arms grew strong.
We waited for the weather to invade.
And those same simple souls bowed down and prayed
That God would make it right. *He made it wrong!*
Poor foolish things—the seas rose mountains high—
Rude Boreas blew—and God stood idly by!

How silent then the voice of Christendom.
How strangely quiet kept the pious priest.
Here was no miracle on which to feast.
No fat! No answer to his prayers! How come?
Yet still in sheep-like blind stupidity
Man clings to Myth—and fears lucidity!

W. H. WOOD.

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