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## IEWS AND OPINIONS

### More About Atheism

THANKS for the unmasked, but very welcome, items of news that reach me from many parts of the world; I gather many interesting newspaper cuttings that I might otherwise never see. There is after all, a very much stronger tie between writer and reader than exists with ordinary newspapers. I sincerely hope that my very wide-spread readers will continue in their useful work. If they would only come and do the writing, the situation would be ideal. At any rate, I have been writing in these columns for over fifty years—I believe it is a world record, and it has become a second nature with me. Perhaps it may be that my writing for so long for the "Freethinker" has been made possible because not many could get hold of me. One never knows.

What set me writing the following was a newspaper cutting from the other side of the Atlantic which contained the information that there has been "a wave of Atheism," but it is now receding. I rather fancy I have heard this receding business before, in this country and others. But in this country the "yarn" seems to have died out. In any case, it is just "Bunkum." A man may engage in some kind of sport, or some sort of walking, etc., and then tire of it. He may swear by a certain kind of food, or games, and then get tired of all. All these kind of things come and go. But knowledge once acquired remains short of the mind's complete decay. As I have often said, Atheism is a one way road. You may never understand Atheism, but once understood it can never be rejected. That seems generally admitted now.

When our present Archbishop of Canterbury took his stand he discovered that Atheism was growing with rapid steps, and Atheism was the real enemy. Then suddenly he dropped the cry. Probably some of his companions advised him to do so. The Archbishop took the hint. He now knows that Atheism once accepted, cannot be abolished. The poor Archbishop thought he was helping to crush Atheism, he was advertising it.

But if we take Atheism in its proper form we may say that Atheism was never so common as it is to-day. Nor is there any real reason why it should not be so. They should not hide their opinions, or express them with an apologetic air. I believe with that fine scientific thinker, Prof. W. K. Clifford, that if a thing is false shout it from the house-tops, and if it is true shout that from the house-top. But all are not built with the fine material that marked W. K. Clifford. His early death was not merely a loss to science, it was a loss of a man who did really shout his opinions from the house-tops and the world was the better for listening.

But this "wave" of religion that is eating up Atheism—where is it? When a "wave" of religion sweeps over a

country there is no great difficulty of seeing it; and when one sees large numbers of men in all walks of life who deliberately declare that they are too busy to attend to religion, it is not so much want of time as it is lack of courage. On the other hand, I do not doubt that in the U.S.A. and in South America people are searching for some form of religion. That is quite a familiar spectacle. Politicians and the like are always ready to snap at anything that pleases for the moment. Our professional operators will provide plenty of examples. The response of the crowd to familiar calls and cries is always at hand. The development of political non-conformity in the late 19th century supplies another instance of this, and then began the coquetting from Socialists. We are, therefore, quite ready to believe that in the North and South Americas there is the same game being played. Playing to a political gallery to gain political ends is now a rather stale game.

Atheism has nothing of this to commend itself to political groups. Right or wrong, the Atheistic point of view is at least clean, and it cannot be used as a "dope." It invites people to think, for Atheism breeds a critical mind in the act of establishing itself. If it does not by necessity involve government by discussion, it does place government *under* it, and against open discussion no sham can stand for long. It cannot hold out the promise of another world to excuse the injustice of this one. Frauds, follies, and wrongs *may* exist with Atheism, but there is no sacred cloak to excuse or lengthen them. In the nature of the case it must work for better conditions in this world because there is no other existing. And while even these features may not prevent the emergence of wrong, Atheism offers good grounds for its removal. In all things, Man is Man, and there is none greater.

And now what is really meant by the information that the "wave" of Atheism is receding? In the first place, I have never seen or heard of a "wave" of Atheism. Our Christian preacher has obviously mixed up what has occurred—if anything—or he is identifying the mental process that leads to Atheism with a Christian's "Night with God." Atheism does not come with waves; it is not an epidemic but the development of a reasonable process. There may be grounds for saying that the Atheist's reasoning is faulty after all, but the Christian must not claim a monopoly of blunders. Atheism really presents a stage in a process of mental development, and that is something to achieve. In fact, in most cases the Atheist was once where the Christian is. But once light is seen it is not easily identified with darkness. Short of some form of mental weakness or disease a plain truth cannot be ignored. It is of course possible, that man may reach to one point and stop. That is actually the fact with many. Or those who have the opportunity may prevent the truth being told—that appears to be the B.B.C. policy where religion is concerned. It has indeed said as much. But once advance has been achieved,

and mental health exists, the word is "forward." It is easy for a Roman Catholic to overcome a Protestant, but the light once seen cannot be completely lost. One may never reach the height of being an Atheist, but once attained, it remains for life. No one can honestly bring the Atheist back to the religion of his childhood unless he is suffering from mental decay.

The progress of Atheism does not, then, proceed in "waves," nor does it decay in any fantastic manner. There may be an arrest of civilisation—such as when Christianity dominated old Rome—and so brought it to decay. But in the nature of things, these social or other drastic changes cannot happen very frequently. Even Rome was not conquered in a generation. It took several centuries to almost completely bury the larger part of Roman and Greek culture, and when the revival occurred the New-birth came along pretty rapidly.

But at its best intellectual development is a tolerably slow process. There is not a genius born every day, but it is certain that there will be born a very fair allowance of comparative fools. In his struggle the Freethinker faces a world which for generations has been saturated in superstition. When the Freethinker began to talk to the religionists he was speaking almost a foreign tongue. He had against him often the combined forces of ignorance and brutality. And, yet, with all these advantages on the part of religion we are seeing it sick to death. The numerous apologies for attacking Atheism are getting thin. In the world of positive science, religion is simply set aside. Even in social matters truth matters little and Atheism is not yet fashionable; Christianity is steadily losing its grip. The habit of thinking about the world in terms of science gets stronger year by year, and God has no place in the scientific workshop. Atheism grows bolder, more confident of its position in the intellectual world. Atheism can be destroyed only by the destruction of civilisation itself.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## THE PLACE OF THE "FIFTH MONARCHY MEN" IN ENGLISH HISTORY

(Concluded from page 115)

It is evident that a projected coup d'état which could so alarm the representative of the oldest and best informed capitalist state in Europe, must have been a formidable affair. So the government evidently thought, to judge from the severity and thorough-going character of its repression. Harrison's popularity with the army saved his life, but the back of the movement was evidently broken by the arrests at Mile End, Shoreditch, and other parts of the kingdom.

The military monarchy of Cromwell and, therewith, the English Revolution itself, eventually met its end at the hands, not of its "ultra-left" critics, but of the Royalist "ultra-right." The death of the great Cromwell (September 3, 1658), "the manager of the present machinery," as another Venetian despatch described the great revolutionary leader, led to the speedy disintegration of the unstable republican régime. As John Thurloe, Cromwell's Secretary of State, remarked prophetically on the Protector's death: "Not his own strength but our divisions will bring Charles Stuart back."

And so it turned out. For in May, 1660, the Restoration Monarchy of Charles the Second came into being; "the spirit of Comedy," in the apt words of Professor Trevelyan, "descended upon our shores." A monarchy, but certainly not one at all on

the lines of that outlined by the seer of Patmos, and so ardently expected by the conspirators of 1657. For by no conceivable alchemy could the Restoration Monarchy of the lover of Nell Gwyn be identified with the millenarian reign of "King Christ."

Amongst the victims of the revived Stuart monarchy were the regicide judges of Charles the First. Conspicuous amongst them was the lion-hearted Harrison, who had led the conspirators of 1657. Had the projected insurrection succeeded, Harrison would, no doubt, have become the terrestrial "Vicar of Christ" until the coming of the expected Messiah. Major-General Harrison endured the barbarities of the English law of high treason with iron fortitude (October 13, 1660). Declaring that "he shed his blood cheerfully for the good cause," and proudly asserting that the execution of Charles the First "was not something done in a corner," he created something of a precedent in judicial executions by rising and striking the executioner *after* he had been hanged and his bowels drawn from his living body, in accordance with the gruesome ritual prescribed for those guilty of high treason. Such was the spirit of those who had fought at the head of Cromwell's storm-troops, and who were to prepare the way of "King Christ."

Men in a humbler walk of life were soon to display the same heroism against uncountable odds. It has always been something of a mystery why the formidable battalions, some 50,000 strong, of Cromwell's "red army" allowed themselves to be so tamely disarmed by the restored monarchy, which possessed no military force of comparable strength to the redoubtable "Ironsides." However, so it was. It was left to a handful of the adherents of "King Christ" to wipe out the disgrace of this ignominious capitulation.

"Venner's insurrection," the last flare-up of the men of the Messianic Monarchy, is thus described by a modern historian of the period:—

"On the night of January 6, 1661, after exhorting his adherents at their meeting-place at Coleman Street, Venner set forth with about 50 men to overthrow the government and set up the 'Fifth Monarchy.' Their watchword was: 'King Jesus and the heads upon the gates.' (i.e., those of Cromwell and the regicides, which had been disinterred and exposed by the Royalist government.—F. A. R.) After a skirmish with the trained bands of the City they retired to Highgate and thence to Ken Wood. On January 9 they appeared again in the City, and those who were not killed were captured by the King's guards in Wood Street after a very sharp fight. The prisoners were tried on January 17 at the Old Bailey, before Chief Justice Foster, and Venner was hanged and quartered before his meeting-house on January 19 at Coleman Street." (cp. Dictionary of National Biography—article on Venner, by Sir Charles Firth.)

Venner, the leader of this last rising of a doomed cause, was an old soldier who had been one of the leaders in the abortive conspiracy of 1657. In his report to Parliament on that event, Cromwell's Secretary of State, Thurloe, described Venner as "a wine-cooper, a fellow of desperate and bloody spirit," and added that he was "the chief and leader" of the 1657 plot.

We may add that the above dry narrative of fact scarcely does justice to the suicidal heroism with which the handful of insurgents confronted the overwhelming odds brought against them. In this last respect, an acute contemporary observer does more justice to these shock-troops of "King Jesus."

"The chief leader of the conspiracy was Thomas Venner, a wine-cooper. On January 6, 1661, after the Restoration, and when the restored monarchy had avenged itself on the 'regicides' with exquisite cruelty, Venner, with a handful of equally daring followers, whom he had excited by his speeches, attempted a new rising for 'The Kingdom of Christ.' They were, at most, some 60 men, but they threw the whole city into a turmoil. Before the superior numbers of the citizen guards and soldiers they fled into a wood.

situated in the north of London between Highgate and Hampstead, but returned to London on January 9, this time numbering 31 men only, who were in a completely frenzied state of mind, quite convinced that neither steel nor bullets could touch the soldiers of Christ, and that His Kingdom was close at hand. They 'have routed all the trained bands that they met with, put the King's life-guards to the run, killed about 20 men, broke through the city-gates twice, and all this in the daytime, when all the City was in arms.' Thus Pepys, in his Diary (January 10, 1660). Pepys adds, after stating their number: 'We did believe them to be at least 500. A thing was never heard of, that so few men should dare and do so much mischief.' They were finally surrounded on all sides, but broke through into a house, which they defended against thousands. After half of them had fallen, the remainder were taken by force (none surrendering voluntarily), only to die on the gallows; Verner being among the number. Verner and a certain Prichard were drawn and quartered and their meeting-house was pulled down." (cp. E. Bernstein: "Cromwell and Communism," p. 184.)

With the death of Verner and the suppression of his insurrection the brief but stormy appearance of the "Fifth Monarchy Men" on the stage of English history abruptly ceased. And it ended in failure. What lay before the English poor was not the communistic Kingdom of "King Christ," but the exploiting Kingdom of "King Capital." Before them lay the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688-9, which substituted for "The Divine Right of Kings," the not-so-divine rule of the Bank of England (founded 1694): the actual "Fifth Monarchy" was to be that, not of Christ, but of Mammon.

And beyond that lay the horrors of the Industrial Revolution, which, for such is the contradictory working of the dialectic that governs history, were themselves to create a new movement that sought in a scientific and realisable future what the millenarian doctrine had sought in a theological and mythical past: Social Justice, Social Equality, in a classless society.

But for the sectaries of the Commonwealth, for the contemporaries of Harrison and Verner, all this lay far in the future: for the England on which they closed their eyes Heaven still made no visible contact with Earth: the Messiah unaccountably delayed his coming: the Thunder on the Left was still.

The sect, or movement, which gathered around the millenarian doctrine, and which sought "to accelerate its coming," had a short and stormy history, but its actual effects were small. In actual historical importance, it cannot be compared with such similarly Utopian sects as the Anabaptists of the preceding (16th) century, with the "Quakers," its exact contemporaries. Its preachers secured a brief notoriety which drew the passing attention of Cromwell, already so sensitive to his critics on the Left. In 1654 it furnished a brief nuisance, which, however, a few arrests sufficed to dispose of. In 1657 it staged an abortive coup d'etat, which fizzled out and without striking a blow, thanks to the vigilance of the Protector's unrivalled political police. In 1661 it finally perished with spectacular but suicidal heroism in Verner's short-lived insurrection.

Nor has the "Fifth Monarchy" left any literary masterpiece to preserve its name and fame to future generations. Though founded upon a theocentric interpretation of history, which was not lacking in imaginative grandeur, the idea of the Messianic reign inspired no new Apocalypse. The great sectarian writers of the English Commonwealth were outside the ranks of the millenarian sect. Not only a Milton or a Bunyan, but even a Winstanley and a Fox were wanting to it. In its propaganda against earthly monarchies it produced no polemic of the literary calibre of Sexby's regicidal classic: "Killing No Murder."

Thus, Millerianism remained merely a dream, a hope, a "wish-fulfilment" of a small section of the English poor, who hoped for a god-given realm of social equality and justice which

would not merely transpose one tyranny for another: the exploitation of capital in place of the feudal Stuart régime. Today, that hope may seem quixotic and bizarre. Mankind has gone after other lore than that of the Seer of Patmos. More scientific interpretations of history have superseded the chiliastic dream of the Messianic Reign.

This much, however, may at least be said: the age-old dreams of social equality and social justice, of a world of human brotherhood fit, not only for Saints, but for ordinary human beings to live in; dreams which lay deeply embedded, for all their bizarre form, in the visions of the "Fifth Monarchy"; still remain unrealised. In that ultimate, fundamental sense, the scientific aspirations of our own age complement and correspond with the eschatological dreams of the bye-gone age of the Reformation. And in that last respect, at least, we are truly at one with the "Men of the Fifth Monarchy."

F. A. RIDLEY.

### IN QUEST OF CIVILISATION

THERE are times in the reading life when one reads a book of extraordinary appeal and it is by no means easy to put into words the reasons for this appeal. Perhaps it is just a fortuitous concurrence of circumstances; or, our vanity may play with the notion that it is a great book because it makes its appeal to our own great mind; or, it may be that for once our enthusiasm and judgment coincide in the recognition of a great book?

For my own part the happy experience of being deeply interested, in fact so fascinated, by a book that everything else had to be put aside for its reading, has created certain beacon lights in my booky recollections. Draper's famous "Conflict of Religion and Science," Winwood Reade's "Martyrdom of Man," Hudson's "Far Away and Long Ago," Gosse's "Father and Son," and in fiction the great Fielding's "Tom Jones" have one and all, during the period of a long reading life, stood out as unique in the profound and lasting impression created at the time of reading.

Now the experience has again been repeated; some time at the latter end of last year I was attracted by the title of a newly published book: "In Quest of Civilisation," by R. G. Latham, M.A. I was at first a little uncertain of the title, the word "Quest" seemed to be an indication of a love of mystery—if not the esoteric—for its own sake, but as I read on I could see that I was mistaken. The author's power of expression and inner structure of great thinking were soon too obvious to be ignored and so I read on, putting down the book with regret at its conclusion.

Mr. Latham tells us the story of Civilisation, its meaning and origin, its rise and decline and, often, extinction. With the classical period the story of our civilisation commences and one has to read Mr. Latham's wonderful book to appreciate how finely the story is told. I note innumerable passages and quotations marked for reference, far too numerous to quote, but perhaps there is just room for Mr. Latham's remarkable quotation and translation from Polybius.

Polybius was the great Greek historian of Rome, the friend of Scipio, the conqueror of Carthage: Describing the Roman constitution, he says:—

"The greatest virtue of the Roman constitution, in my judgment, is its attitude towards the gods; and what holds Roman society together is the very thing of which others are most contemptuous—superstition. Many are surprised to find this gorgeously dramatised and introduced into both private and public life in a way that defies exaggeration. In my view this has been done deliberately for the sake of the masses. In a commonwealth of sages there might be no place for such practices; but, since the masses are everywhere

fickle and full of lawless desires, irrational impulses and violent temper, they can be held together only by the unseen terrors and ceremonial splendour of religion. Therefore, I believe, it was not at haphazard that the ancients instilled into the masses the notion of god and tales of Hades; rather it is the men of our day who are heedless fools to banish these beliefs. So it is that, whereas among the Greeks, to take only one example, if public men are entrusted with so much as a talent under the safeguard of ten recorders and as many seals and twice as many witnesses, they cannot keep their trust. The Romans, when they handle great sums in office or on embassies, are faithful to their trust on the mere pledge of an oath. Elsewhere it is seldom that a man handles public funds and keeps his hands clean; among the Romans it is seldom that one is found guilty of such practices."

It is seldom that one finds—particularly in historical literature—religion as a political instrument so perfectly defined. There can be no doubt whatever, that Hobbes, Voltaire and almost in our own day, Bagehot in his masterpiece, "The British Constitution," had well thumbed the pages of Polybius.

There is a whisper abroad that Mr. Latham has in preparation a sequel to the "Quest" which I feel certain his readers will eagerly anticipate.

R. F. TURNEY.

## SCEPTICISM IN THE CATHEDRAL?

MURDER in the Cathedral! This is bad enough, but perhaps scepticism is worse. No doubt it was considered earth-shaking news when, almost on the last day in December, 1170, it was bruted abroad that an Archbishop, even the great Becket, had been killed at Canterbury. Murder, however, affects only the body, infidelity kills the soul. Presumably the Archbishop went to Heaven, but an atheist orating in the sanctuary might have sent many to Hell!

With some such consideration in mind I read an announcement outside Southwark Cathedral that the Provost would discourse on the alluring subject, "How do we know that Jesus really existed?" It was a bit shocking—at first. On second thoughts I reflected that it would be play-acting, and nothing else. However, having always a liking for comedy in this sad world, I was ready to go, and found myself one of a small congregation that gathered in the Harvard Chapel at 1 p.m. to hear this alarming question discussed. I probably knew that Cathedral better than anyone else and—speaking only as an antiquarian and historical student—had more feelings of affection for it than any of the clergy. I took parties there thirty years ago, they so often—like Omar Khayyam in this world—have so little time to stay and, once departed, return no more.

I was interested to meet the Provost. We had corresponded on Shakespeare. On that subject I found his knowledge somewhat superficial. With the clergy, credulity is as much the badge of the tribe as the dog collar. A man who swallows Bethlehem will not strain at Stratford. (Incidentally, it was rather shocking to read in so respectable a paper as "The Listener," that there is "evidence which makes the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem rather than Nazareth subject to historical doubt"). The Provost was a pleasant smiling gentleman. The clergy usually are. Is it part of the College training? I do not say that they are taught to smile and smile and to be villains—they are taught that it is the only way successfully to peddle their poor antiquated theological stuff. The unwary are melted by it.

We started with the hymn, "How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds"—to create an atmosphere favourable for candid discussion! "Lead Kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom" might have been better. The atmosphere generally—as the

clergy avow—is, so far as the faith is concerned, fitly to be so described. Before the address commenced, an appeal was made for a shorthand writer to take down the discourses of which this was the first. There was no response. The naïveté of what then came from the Provost's lips made it seem more suited for desert air than for written record.

At the outset we were introduced to a hypothetical man in the street who was supposed to have raised doubts as to the historicity of Jesus. It was not suggested the said man was in the Cathedral. It was well he was not: he could hardly have felt pleased by the handling of the problem by the Provost. The latter told us he could, if he would, have brought along contemporary Jewish witnesses. Surely the man in the street would have been more interested with these in the picture than Matthew, Mark, Luke or John? This was not the Provost's view. Having thus cursorily alluded to these shadowy witnesses he could have called, if he appealed only to the Biblical writers. Supposing that Mahomet was questionable as an historical character; what would the Provost think if the Koran was offered as the primary evidence? I have asked the Provost (in a questionnaire of 39 items) for these Jewish writers, but have received no reply.

We had the usual stuff about the impossibility of a man of literary genius inventing the character of Jesus. I was not impressed by this argument, partly because I had reason to suspect deficiencies in the Provost's knowledge of literature. In a sense I could be with the Provost. Would any man of literary genius have produced a character with such ludicrous inconsistencies? He blesses little children, and curses a barren fig tree: he is tender to a Magdalene, stern to his own mother, and uses language about rival religionists that parsons hardly like to quote in the pulpit. The Devil, we were told, inflicts us with all sorts of doubts. So apparently a Provost, at this time of day, believes in a personal devil! I hope he will endeavour to convert his brother, the Dean of St. Paul's, to this splendidly diabolical agency. "You cannot get away from the absurd grandeur of the character of Jesus Christ." Most true—if you turn the blind eye to such incidents as I have mentioned above.

Then we had a long and most irrelevant passage about the Greeks. The Provost believed in the historicity of Jesus because he did not conform to their expectations. What were they? When did they have messianic ideas? Jesus "never tried to convince men by signs." Were not the alleged miracles signs? Would not the man in the street have been amazed by the Provost's coolly ignoring them? Perhaps he thought it was easier to ignore than grasp this nettle. Who can imagine a man who could give sight to the blind, heal the sick, and raise the dead being put to death? Had the Provost never read Gibbon's famous passage:—

"How shall we excuse the supine inattention of the pagan and philosophic world to those evidences which were presented by the hand of Omnipotence not to their reason but to their senses? During the age of Christ, of his apostles, and of their first disciples, the doctrine which they preached was confirmed by innumerable prodigies. The lame walked, the blind saw, the sick were healed, the dead were raised, demons were expelled, and the laws of nature were frequently suspended for the benefit of the church. But the sages of Greece and Rome turned aside from the awful spectacle and pursuing the ordinary occupations of life and study, appeared unconscious of any alterations in the moral and physical government of the world."

Probably the Provost shrunk from the miracles because he knew that some of his brethren in holy orders lacked his credulity. As remarkable as the ignoring of miracles was the omission to mention St. Paul. The man in the street might well have asked why he evinced no knowledge of the marvels Gibbon mentions. Surely his enthusiasm would have taken him on a far journey to see the wonder-worker? The Provost, too, seemed to accept the fourth gospel as equal in value, as an historical

record, to the other three. How many of his cloth share that view? "The apocryphal gospels wanted to decorate the manner of his birth." Surely the suggestion that it was abnormal, i.e., of a virgin, was "decorating"? Does the Provost deny the virgin birth?

"The Roman Catholic Church thought of Jesus as a great leader and Jesus disdained pomp." This was richness indeed, from an Anglican priest. The point could be fittingly made only by some nonconformists and all quakers. A few months before I had seen the Bishop of London preceded to the pulpit by a verges carrying the "poker," as a crozier has been profanely called. Similar ceremonial takes place in Southwark Cathedral. Is it maintained that Jesus, prior to delivering the "Sermon on the Mount" was robed in splendour and led by an acolyte?

Of course, there was no word of the scholars who had denied the historicity of Jesus. I doubt if the Provost had heard of Robertson, Drews, W. B. Smith, Couchoud, Brandes, or Rylands. Had he heard of Apollonius of Tyana, of whom Mr. Cutner has written so interestingly in recent issues of the "Freethinker"? Surely though the man in the street might have expected that they would be boldly tackled?

When the Provost concluded there was another appeal for a reporter; again in vain. I had not volunteered, but I had reported! One of my reflections was that we sat under the arms of Queen Anne, to commemorate her visit to the Cathedral. The Provost's creed was as dead as that lady, but professional interests compel the clergy to ignore theological putrefaction.

What good did this discourse do? Looking at it from the Provost's point of view, I should say none whatever. As always, in religious assemblies, the women outnumbered the men. Some of them had probably never heard of doubts as to the historicity of Jesus. The Provost may have raised spectres that his feeble efforts could not dispel. If I still believed in a Day of Judgment, I should think that Christian Evidence lecturers might have much to answer for! Their sowing of doubt may be far more deadly than any antidote of faith can remedy. If the Provost will take a hint from an older man than himself, he will leave such questions alone. He is, in this sea, out of his depth.

It is a sign of the times that such a subject should be introduced into a Cathedral. I doubt if it would have been tolerated, whatever the treatment, before the 20th century. The "Gates of Hell can never 'gainst that church prevail," runs a popular hymn. However that may be, it is evident that the guns of scepticism have torn terrible breaches in the Christian citadel. When such a question must be met even in the holy places.

WILLIAM KENT.

## HE NOTHING OF RELIGION KNOWS WHO ONLY KNOWS HIS OWN

Some of the older Faiths very briefly examined

### HINDUISM

AS now taught to the common people, Hinduism is based more or less on, but not by any means always in accord with, Buddhism, with which all sorts of more ancient cults have become intermingled into a truly kaleidoscopic and almost incomprehensible patchwork.

Religions take many centuries to build up but perhaps we might place this development at about a thousand years old. It has no particular founder, its various Holy Scriptures (Vedas and Mantras) being the compilations of various saints, prophets and men-gods (cf. Genesis vi.) such as Krishna, conceived of a Holy Spirit and born of a virgin mother.

Apparently the most essential part of this Faith is its insistence on the rigid rules of caste. In modern India caste is an

hereditary social group whose members follow, and have always inevitably followed, some traditional occupation, potters, carpenters, farmers, etc. The highest caste are the Brahmans, claiming to be descendants of the prehistoric god Brahma (head of the Holy Trinity including Siva and Vishnu); the lowest caste are the "Untouchables," probably descendants of tribes enslaved in ancient wars.

Hindus have the pessimistic idea—far older in India than Hinduism—that all effort is futile and therefore evil, and that the "Chief Good" is the attainment through fasting and meditation of Nirvana, a sort of neutralisation of all emotion. The pervading idea of the pious Hindu burdened with the morbid, ever-present consciousness of "Sin" (an unpleasant outlook, perhaps borrowed from Christianity) is mortification of the flesh by the sacrifice of every physical comfort in the hope of propitiating the gods, of which there are legion. The white sahib's conception of a single, omnipotent god controlling, foreordaining and responsible for the whole unhappy world is a perpetual amazement to the educated Hindu, and these two mutually opposing ideas are good examples of how easy it is to implant in the mind at childhood the most fantastic beliefs, which few adults ever think of questioning afterwards so long as everyone round them appears to accept them.

He is not generally interested in things like patriotism, so dear to the heart of war-making nations, his concern being for his soul, which he has been taught to believe transmigrates from body to body, including animal bodies, which changes are governed by his Karma or conduct in each incarnation. Until this Karma is accepted his soul cannot re-enter the Mahatma, or Great Spirit, whence it originated.

Forlong, in his "Faiths of Man," writes that: "The Hindus are superior to Christians in goodness, holiness and happiness. The poorer classes in Christian lands are infinitely more wretched and vicious than Hindus." The Hindu is pantheistic, seeing spirits, gods and what-have-you in everything, organic and inorganic.

His worship of, and belief in the powers of, images is very similar to that of Roman Catholics, but the *neo-Hindu's* complete independence of all priestly humbug is in very striking contrast. They correspond more or less with the "Modernist" Christians who reject most of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Christian Faith but profess to retain belief in certain parts of it not quite so patently ridiculous as the rest. The masses, however, still live in perpetual fear of evil spirits, and the village pujari does a brisk trade, just as Christian priests did in the Dark Ages. Fear is, of course, the bedrock of all religions. Very many books have been written attempting to explain the truly staggering complexities of Hinduism, both old and new versions.

Indian official police figures state that 1 in every 270 European Christians has a police record as against 1 in every 1,350 Hindus.

M. C. BROTHERTON, COMDR., R.N.

### THE PUNISHMENT FOR SACRILEGE

The mode of punishment for robbing the Church in former days was of the most inhuman and barbarous nature, i.e., flaying the offender, and affixing the skin to the church door. According to the Archaeological Journal, in the rural hamlet of Hadstock, Essex, is a church in which could at one time be seen the skin of a "pirate Northman" "as a ghastly memorial of ecclesiastical vengeance and a warning to all who approached the church with the like unhallowed intention."

In ancient history several specimens of the like barbarity are stated to have been carried out. The Emperor Valerian was flayed alive, as also was Hugo de Cressingham, in the reign of Edward I, by the Scots at Strivelyn in the year 1296.

## ACID DROPS

Continually we are being asked questions concerning the rights of a British subject and his refusal to take the oath in a court or elsewhere. The quickest and clearest reply is to reprint the law as it stands.

## INSTRUCTIONS TO WITNESSES, JURORS, AND OTHERS.

The following is the exact text of the Oaths Act, 1888:—

## AN ACT TO AMEND THE LAW AS TO OATHS.

Be it enacted by the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:—

1. Every person upon objecting to being sworn, and stating as the ground of such objection, either that he has no religious belief, or that the taking of an oath is contrary to his religious belief, shall be permitted to make his solemn affirmation instead of taking an oath in all places and for all purposes where an oath is or shall be required by law, which affirmation shall be of the same force and effect as if he had taken the oath; and if any person making such affirmation shall wilfully, falsely, and corruptly affirm any matter or thing which, if deposed on oath, would have amounted to wilful and corrupt perjury, he shall be liable to prosecution, indictment, sentence, and punishment in all respects as if he had committed wilful and corrupt perjury.

2. Every such affirmation shall be as follows:—

"I, A.B., do solemnly, sincerely, and truly declare and affirm," and then proceed with the words of the oath prescribed by law, omitting any words of imprecation or calling to witness.

3. When an oath has been duly administered and taken, the fact that the person to whom the same was administered had, at the time of taking such oath, no religious belief, shall not for any purpose affect the validity of such oath.

4. Every affirmation in writing shall commence, "I, —, of —, do solemnly and sincerely affirm," and the form in lieu of jurat shall be "Affirmed at —, this — day of —, 18—. Before me."

5. If any person to whom an oath is administered desires to swear with uplifted hand, in the form and manner in which an oath is usually administered in Scotland, he shall be permitted so to do, and the oath shall be administered to him in such form and manner without further question.

6. The Acts mentioned in the Schedule to this Act are hereby repealed to the extent in the third column of the schedule mentioned.

7. This Act may be cited as the Oaths Act, 1888.

The judge may ask on what ground the objection to the oath is made, and in that case the reply is either it is against your religious belief, or that you have no religious belief. No further questioning should be made.

From one of our leading Roman Catholic papers we get the information that thieves broke into the Grotto of "Our Lady" and took therefrom some of the Church decorations. The value of the goods stolen was one hundred pounds. The thieves got away safely just as if they had been robbing a Freethinker's house. It is all very strange, when we hear that so many of "Our Ladies" are fluttering round, and can perform miracles at any moment. For the future this particular grotto should put its money on a good wide-awake policeman. Any angel could be dismissed.

Where Christianity is concerned the B.B.C. has plenty of nonsense on hand. Consider "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another." That was commonplace teaching long, long before Jesus was heard of, and in any case Christians have never played up to it. Christians hate unbelievers, and they often enough hate one another. In America, the White Christian hates the black one with a very hearty hatred. Black Christians in this country are often denied residence in a white man's hotel. In South Africa, the whites are doing what they can to prevent the coloured natives having equal treatment with white Christians. When it comes to "Thou shalt hate thy fellow man," Christians can never be considered backward. We should really like to see the B.B.C. permit a plain statement of the way in which Christians have shown brotherly love for others when religion was really active.

Perhaps the most disgusting piece of rhetoric that has ever been put on the air was the delivery of a series of lectures by Professor C. H. Dodd. We know nothing of this gentleman, but he may be in some things quite a good teacher and a well-informed man in many directions. That being granted, the shame of a man standing day after day and throwing over the air a series of miracles that appear in the New Testament concerning the life and death of Jesus remains. A good number of the miracles were cited, just as they might have been cited in the middle seventeenth century. All of them could be put aside as fantastic—if not worse—by a decently educated schoolboy. The whole thing reminds us of an incident when a boy in a house near where we lived told us the story of Jesus in quite a lively way. When he finished he asked, "Is that really true?" and he replied quite innocently, "Oh well, it is in the Bible, it isn't history." That gave truth in a nutshell and I said no more. We wonder whether Professor Dodd would speak in the same way to a critic. He is quite safe behind the B.B.C. Nothing can be too absurd for its religious section.

In the course of a House of Lords' case in which the wife refused "to continue normal married life," Lord Justice said in the Court of Appeal, so runs the newspaper report, "Marriage, whether in an established Church or in a Register office is regarded as a Christian marriage." With all due respect to the judge, that is not the case. Legally, there is no such thing as a "Christian" or a "religious" marriage. There is only marriage in England and that is through the Registry office, and there is not a word of religion connected with it. After that people may have whatever service they please. It does not affect the real marriage in any degree. The Christian marriage was wiped out years ago, and preachers have not all been honest enough to tell the truth about it.

Our very religious contemporary, the "Daily Mail," is printing a series of articles inquiring into the "Faith" of the nation. It appears to be very disturbed by the almost complete lack of faith shown everywhere in all classes, and it is going all out to get the people of Britain back into the Church—or some Church, any Church, so long as it is a Christian Church. Well, this is not the first attempt to bring about a religious revival in the country and even with the very powerful backing of the "Daily Mail," we can prophesy the complete failure of any Christian revival again.

There is only one way of proving religion to be worth while. It must be infallibly shown that a God is necessary, that he has a Son, who is himself, who is a "Saviour," that he, or both, can answer prayers, and that miracles are daily performed. It must also be shown, by concrete facts, that this God or the two of them, are undoubtedly doing things—that they are not just words in the sky. And these are things which not even the "Daily Mail" can do.

When it comes to explaining religious difficulties to and bewildered believers not many of our religious journals equal the "Universe." Its latest exploit is to show why the notorious "Index" is such a wonderful and "salutary" institution. It points out how indiscriminate reading, where the guiding hand of a divinely inspired priest is lacking, leads to imbibing poisonous germs, wrong "moral ideas," a denial of the True Church and so on. It is all very pathetic. One reader wanted to know why "The Pilgrim's Progress" was forbidden reading for a Catholic, and the answer is, "the Papacy is spoken of slightly," and the book is "impregnated with Protestant errors"; while as to Gibbon, whose monumental history is forbidden, it is because he maintains that Christianity is not Divine. And we have no doubt that the Catholic sheep delighted with these marvellous "answers."

The President of the Methodist Conference, Dr. R. N. P. declared recently that there was "a great disposition in Methodism" to respond favourably to the Christian "unity" envisaged by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Methodists, instead of being isolationists, wanted to be "co-operationists." Perhaps one day we shall see the Church of England swallow Methodism out of existence. Something of the kind will be done if the Churches want to survive the onslaught of Freethought or, at least, that of "indifferentism."

# "THE FREETHINKER"

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

## TO CORRESPONDENTS

**BENEVOLENT FUND N.S.S.**—The General Secretary N.S.S. gratefully acknowledges a donation of 10s. from the North London Branch N.S.S., and 5s. 6d. from Mr. F. McKay to the Benevolent Fund of the Society.

To "The Freethinker."—Mr. F. W. Harper (Dublin), £2 2s.

**T. E. NIVES.**—Next week. It is good work.

**L. LAWRENCE.**—Your note from newspapers would have been useful, but you omitted name and date of newspapers. These are indispensable.

*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

Arrangements for the Annual Conference of the N.S.S. at Newcastle-on-Tyne during the Whitsun week-end (May 24-26) are all in hand, but it is very necessary for those attending to notify the General Secretary at 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1, if they require hotel accommodation or tickets for the Conference lunch, this should be done without delay. It is hoped that an evening can be arranged for the Monday and it will help if those wishing to join the party will inform Mr. J. T. Brighton, 23, Browns Buildings, Chester-le-Street, Co. Durham.

We believe that the very fine work of Winwood Reade, "The Martyrdom of Man" is still in circulation. It really is a beautiful book, even in spite of it being out of date to some extent, and it is finely written. The author was a man who in his time knew Christianity both as a system and in action. Here is one of his very cutting, but perfectly justified, remarks. This is the way he puts meaning shrouded in sermons in plain daylight.

"The religious man prays—that is to say he begs; he sings hymns—that is to say he flatters. He sacrifices—that is he pays tribute, chiefly out of fear but partly in the hope of getting something in return."

Can anyone say that these summaries are not true, deadly true, and a truth that should make men and women stop to think and realise to what low level Christianity is likely to drag one. We ought to add that Winwood Reade belonged to a time when real Christianity was not afraid of showing itself. Today most of its public defenders appear to be devoting themselves to the very hard job of making historic Christianity read as though it was respectable.

We have had time only to turn the pages of Bishop Barnes' book "The Rise of Christianity." But our impression is that though its pages will leave Christianity where it is, it does lead to suggestions that might make the established church collapse quicker than it might have done. That is not blaming the Bishop—we are inclined to be sorry for wasted time. We cannot say when Christianity will die; no one has been able to say when a religion dies. But the certainty is that religions have always

died sooner or later. With a large number of people, Christianity is already dead, but there are many who, like Bishop Barnes, like dead things better than live ones. Still, Bishop Barnes' five hundred pages form what one may honestly call pleasant reading.

That indefatigable writer on London, Mr. William Kent, has just added another book to the many he has written on the great city. Its title is, "The Lost Treasures of London," and is a fascinating account—though a very sad one—of the way London was bombed during the war and of the monuments, churches and notable buildings, and other treasures, many of them irreplaceable, we lost in consequence. The book is beautifully illustrated and handsomely got up, and is one future historians of London must consult for contemporary accounts of what happened during the six years of war. Copies can be had from the author at 71, Union Road, London, S.W. 1, price 12s. 6d.

We were in Germany just before that fine specimen of Christian humanity, Hitler, came to power. During our stay we visited the castle of "August the Strong," one of Germany's petty kings. The feature by which he was well known was that he had become the father of no less than 364 children—of course, by quite a collection of women. The man who took us round had nothing to say that was derogatory to August, and we were informed that no one appeared to have been upset about it. No one could deny the king was the father of his people, and no bother seemed to come from the clergy of his day. But besides being a good Christian, he was a generous one and provided every mother he had round him. But the curious thing was that while the people did not see anything wrong in the birth of the children, August got into serious trouble because he gave each mother a good allowance, and that the people did resent. It meant heavy taxes. The one really good thing the king did almost cost him his throne. We wonder what our Charles the Second would have said? We believe he also spread money about freely for the same reason as "August the Strong."

We have had the usual burst of religious nonsense of the son of God coming down to earth to be crucified, so that those who worship him may be relieved from being sent to hell because of the sin of Adam. Of course, the origin of this particular superstition is well-known to anthropologists, and in one form or another it is found in many parts of the world. But the B.B.C., as usual, has provided a speaker for six evenings to tell this ancient piece of superstition as though the story must be considered a reliable piece of history. We know that this story is part and parcel of the Christian religion, but superstition is superstition even when the B.B.C. declares it is sound history. Every educated person ought to know that it is a piece of folklore.

The Merseyside Branch of the N.S.S. are holding the first post-war annual dinner at the Bradford Hotel, Tithebarn Street, Liverpool, on Saturday, April 26, commencing at 7 p.m.

It is hoped that there will be a good attendance of Freethinkers from all parts of Merseyside, and the surrounding districts, and that opportunity will be taken by all who are able to use this occasion to become better acquainted with the folk who are interested and active workers in the movement in this part of the country.

Tickets (price 8s. 6d) can be obtained from the Branch Secretary, Miss A. Parry, 476, Mill Street, Liverpool 8. Early application is necessary.

We have to report that the West London Branch of the N.S.S. has concluded its winter session. On the whole 22 discussions were held, most being good meetings. The smaller ones may be attributed to the terrible weather that dominated the larger part of the term. The Committee desires to pay tribute to its Secretary, E. C. Saphin, one of our oldest members, who defied the weather and was always present. He arranged the whole of the winter programmes. That he has now reached his 85th year is a fine example of persistence. We are all indebted to him. The Branch will renew its Hyde Park meetings. We wish the Branch every success.

Mr. T. Mosley is losing no time before getting to work in the open. In the Old Market Square, Nottingham, to-day, he will speak on "What Do Christians Believe?" at 6-30 p.m. Mr. Mosley is a member of the N.S.S., is well versed in its traditions, and has a wide knowledge of the Movement which he uses to good advantage.

## ON READING JAMES JOYCE

THE article by our distinguished contributor, N. T. Gridgeman, on James Joyce, which appeared recently in these columns, made me think of that oft-quoted saying that it takes all sorts of people to make a world, though I felt it might be changed to, it takes all sorts of books to make readers, or, it takes all sorts of readers to make a book.

I remember quite well when "Ulysses" first appeared, for at that time I belonged to a society which made a special fetish of psycho-analysis; though, in truth, my inherent scepticism made it impossible for me to accept most of the conclusions so reverently believed in by other members. I found that when I asked for evidence I was greeted with the kind of look Oliver Hardy gives Stan Laurel in some of their exquisitely funny situations on the screen.

Be that as it may, however, "Ulysses" was introduced into our circle with a particularly hushed awe—here was the great masterpiece which psycho-analysis had at last produced. As the book was not allowed to come into this country, the odd copies which had been smuggled in were treated as if they were a rare Gutenberg Bible, or a Shakespeare First Folio. Joyce himself was discussed as if he were Balzac, Dickens, Dostoevsky, and Shakespeare rolled into one, and the more he was discussed, the more I was burning to read him. It was not easy to get the loan of a copy but I managed it at last.

Now I must frankly admit that I was brought up, so to speak, on writers like Dickens, Thackeray, Scott, Balzac, and scores of other lesser writers—by which I do not mean that these were far below the great masters of literature. On the contrary, indeed, I read the "second-raters" with the greatest pleasure, and I do so now. There are scores of brilliant writers who, without reaching front rank, stand high with discriminating readers. We know that life is short, that time is valuable, and that there are large numbers of absolutely first-class works to be read, screaming out for us to read; they look reproachfully at us sometimes from our book shelves as we pass them by with the thought that some day we really must tackle them—though, at the moment, we are deeply engrossed in a book that may not be even second-rate, but third-rate.

Perhaps this attitude of mind will account for my finding "Ulysses" about the most utterly boring book I had ever read. This, the great psycho-analytic masterpiece! This, a work over which scores of people in my circle were raving about! Never was my heresy so badly received.

After all, a work of fiction should at least be entertaining. It should contain some kind of writing or characterisation or description or some first-class ideas or wit and humour which are unforgettable. There are scenes in "Crime and Punishment" which sear the memory, so powerful is the writing; Dickens, Scott, and Thackeray have given us worlds in which their creations move, so vividly described that they are almost part of genuine history. When an author can make you laugh or cry with him, when he stirs every fibre of emotion within you, when you can go back again and again to him—as you certainly can with "Pickwick" or "Vanity Fair"—you have the test of real greatness.

I heard Mr. Desmond McCarthy give a broadcast when James Joyce died, and he had almost nothing but praise for this almost super-human genius. But I did notice one thing. Though, in the critic's opinion, Joyce had a terrific influence on all subsequent writers, Mr. McCarthy used just the kind of English people who are not super-geniuses are in the habit of using. So for that matter does Mr. Gridgeman. I mention this because three-quarters of "Ulysses" is written in a hopeless mixture of English and "new" writings which led the way to Joyce's last work, "Finnigan's Wake," a book which either takes one into the seventh heaven of delight or flings you into a kind of bottomless pit of exasperation. I have neither of the books by me, but

it is just here that should have liked to illustrate with actual specimens from them what I mean.

I never read, of course, "Finnigan's Wake," because I have better things to do than to wade through pages of words like "yob yob yob yob isityob isityob yob yob itis yob," and so on, *ad lib.* Joyce may have influenced many people, but it is difficult for a plain man like myself to see in what way and how much. It is true that that remarkable child on the wireless, Horace, may speak like Joyce writes, but I have never come across anybody else. Or, to put it another way, I do not believe for a moment that any sane writer has been influenced in the slightest degree by James Joyce, in spite of what our (so-called) critics say. In "Ulysses," which never went quite to the heights of complete balderdash that "Finnigan's Wake" reaches, there is, I suppose some attempt to tell us something, but I never quite discovered what it was. I think the idea was to tell us what a man thinks during twenty-four hours, and if that is so I can only say—who cares? I can hardly remember anything whatever in this huge book, it never stirred up the slightest emotion in me but extreme distaste. Knowing as I did the extravagant claims made by all kinds of "experts" for psycho-analysis, I could not be altogether surprised at what was said so very reverently about "Ulysses," but I never got any logical reasons for all this adulation; and I have never seen any since, in spite of the spate of books or articles which "critics" manage to get published in appreciation of Joyce.

James Joyce was a Roman Catholic Irishman who, to put it very mildly, did not like England. Whether he gave up Roman Catholicism altogether I do not know, though the only information I managed to get on this was that, like Hitler, he never disavowed the religion into which he was born. In any case, when it comes to art, the question as to whether a man is or is not religious is wholly beside the point. I think Michael Angelo was very religious, but that did not prevent his work being perhaps the greatest of any artist that ever lived. All that matters to us is a man's work—is it great art, or not? And I think it could easily be shown by actual quotation that by the test Joyce completely fails.

But if that is my opinion, I want it to be clearly understood that anybody who thoroughly differs from me has a right to say so and to go into raptures if necessary. There are people these days who champion Picasso as a painter, and just love to stand in adoring ecstasy before one of his typical portraits—a smudge in the centre of the canvas, an ear in the right-hand corner, eight eyes in the left-hand corner, three mouths mixed with feet and hands in another corner, and in the last his signature. They are very greatly hurt if you disagree with them. And it is the same thing in music. Chopin and Schubert are pushed on one side and the modern music fans will go to no end of trouble to listen to a concatenation of discordant sounds and evince the greatest displeasure if a scrap of melody gets by accident into the score.

For me, therefore, I must hark back to the men and women whose work is by nearly general consent considered great, work which has stood the test of time and the whims and moods of different generations. There is also some which never received universal acclamation but which still has the "divine flame" that something which cannot be explained. Who, to give one example, knowing something about the life and personality of Laurence Sterne would ever have credited him with "Tristram Shandy" and "A Sentimental Journey?" If not absolutely in the first flight, what pleasure they have given to thousands. And, as a thrilling romance which grips the reader on every page, has anything greater of its kind ever been written than Dumas' "The Count of Monte Cristo?"

Perhaps my appreciation of the authors named in this article—except Joyce—stamps me as an ignorant low-brow who is incapable of understanding genuine highbrow masterpieces. So be it. I gladly accept the criticism and exult in my preferences.

H. CUTNER



# IMPRESSIONS OF 1946

## IV.

**ATHEISM—RADIO ACTIVE!**—Over KQW—Sunday, November 17, Robert Scott talked for 30 minutes on "There is no God!" A fairly tame sermon; nothing to scare much of the Divinity out of a Christian.

In July, 1946, the Federal Communication Commission issued an opinion that "Atheists could not be denied the Radio." Leading newspapers and weekly magazines broke out with a rash of wild protests against horrid atheists. "Time" and "Newsweek" printed some typical howls from various organisations as well as from individuals. Christian "toleration," of course, was sadly lacking. The deep chagrin and excruciating agony of these "protest" letters (from "Tolerant" Christians who love their "Brothers in Humanity"), gave some of us the most Divine guffaws we've had in years!

The real barrier to overcome in Radio broadcasting is finding a station of any importance that has any spot of Free Time; that is, not already sold or contracted by some wealthy firm like Kraft's Cheese, Wrigley's Chewing Gum, or Maiden Dew Soap. Where there's a will there's an excuse.

But we haven't failed yet; we simply haven't succeeded. (May I send you one of my little booklets, "Bless you and keep you in the Altogether Lovely Christ," absolutely free?)

**EGYPTIAN "EASTER"**—APRIL 22.—To this Scoffer it's a new one, with just about as much sense as the Christian Easter. In fact, if I'm ever in Cairo, I'll surely get up early and Sniff-the-Breeze; unless I've sniffed too much cognac the night before. We sit cross-legged, count "one-two-three." Exhale. Say "I will, I will!" Inhale. All enjoy it, Copts, Jews, Christians, Moslems, and all the rest of the rabble.

You breathe deeply of the dawn air, the last few breaths of departing Spring; the better to endure the summer's rigor, my dear Omar; what charming Hooey it is, my dears! Hooey, that's you dummy.

**DR. TOWNSEND'S "PERPETUAL" PLAN.**—Since skimming through Dr. Townsend's autobiography "New Horizons" I've been meditating on my own past 56 years life and wondering why I had to be an honest man. Dr. Townsend by self-confession was a failure for 65 years.

Then he had an idea (along the lines of your Mr. Beveridge's). Dr. Townsend reflected: "As a farmer I'm a successful failure; my father's slogan was 'Don't fight your work—Do it the easy way,' so I've often lain down beside it and done it that way; as a doctor I'm an excellent quack; I've been half-starved for years; instead of being a plump, jolly, confidence-inspiring personality, I'm taciturn, sour-pussed, vinegar-faced and look as though I was dying on the hoof. It isn't that we need a better 5 cent cigar—no, indeed! We need bigger and better manure spreaders." So the Pension-for-old-Folks began and Dr. Townsend went in with the tide of Roosevelt's New Deal crack-

—let Utopias, 1932. Just how many Townsend Clubs there are in the U.S.A. we do not know. By perusing their weekly Journal we do know they have bought a printing plant and other valuable properties throughout the land. The shekels roll in. And at 80 the old man is a success, though it took him 65 years to discard the false teachings of his father.

Dr. Francis E. Townsend doesn't work the hard way, nor the easy way. He visits his office "headquarters" occasionally, delivers the official line of goo, flies here and there to give the old folks the razzmatazz, and off and on has to pull some Vulture's hands out of the office cash-box.

The Townsend Dynasty, when looked into thoroughly, is nasty all right all right. It is planned ad perpetuum to carry the sons through life nicely enough. And nightly the Old Folk stand and sing "Dear Doctor Townsend, our Leader and Guide," set to the tune of a church hymn.

If the "Townsend Plan" is passed tomorrow by Congress the present Social Security Plan, with its billions of dollars deposits and thousands of offices and clerks would have to go. Congress has never given the Plan anything but a nod, and then promptly threw it out. But the racket goes on and the shekels flow in, like the lazy Pacific, wave after wave. O Gawd! Why was I born honest!

**THAT IRON CURTAIN.**—A little preceding World War II, the "National Geographic Magazine" ran several lengthy articles on Russia and the *New Cities* east of the Urals, including some on the borders of Siberia, the articles illustrated by many photographs and the whole thing "revealing" to say the least. Since this recent "Iron Curtain" hoax began appearing almost every day in the papers, we have often wondered about those National Geographic Articles of some five or six years ago.

Still, of course, times can change. Yet this Curtain Business, by its persistence, begins to smell of fish.

**PROPHECY RACKET.**—This, too, goes on and on like the waves of the lazy Pacific. There's a School of Prophecy here in Los Angeles and those who wish to be especially equipped for a Life of Prophecy with accompanying jargon may acquire all their hides will hold. Several prophecy magazines published here also, and a "Biblical Research" Society with elaborate monthly magazine, but not the sort of Society some of you fellows are thinking of. This one does the "research" in their own private library, and everywhere they look evidence is found to support Jethus the Kwyst, or Gawd O'Mighty, or the Epistle Paul of Tarthus; who wouldn't get maudlin from reading it!

You knew the ark had been discovered on Mount Ararat several years ago, didn't you?

**GLOVED HAND IN THE OPEN.**—Catholic Radio "Orator," Fulton J. Sheen, titled "Monsignor," takes credit in the Press for conversion to Catholic Church of Columnist Heywood Brown, Henry Ford II, Congresswoman Clare Booth Luce and other lesser known fry. "There is an emotional appeal," the news item reads, "in his resonant tremolo tones"; a part of which is this senseless ditty:—

"Lovely lady, dressed in blue, teach me how to pray.  
God was once your little boy—Tell me what to say."

And eight of his speeches have been made on phonograph records. A part of one spiel runs, "the symbol of the folded hands—they cannot strike, they cannot protect, for they can only supplicate, only pray. . . ." Whose hands to be folded? Yours and mine; so the long arm of Rome can reach unobstructedly for what it wants?

No wonder the Russians cleaned House 25 years ago.

**ELECTION SHADOWS.**—British municipal elections in November look like another victory for Socialist and Labour. Attention is called to the Fabian Society originated in the 1880's by Shaw, Wells, Webb, etc., and credit for the present Socialist gains is given accordingly due to Fabian teachings. We note the Shaw utterance, a message for the Society, that they have now "to make Henry Wallace succeed Franklin Roosevelt as President of the United States." Much as some of us regard Shaw, this wish is foredoomed. Wallace will never be President, it is doubtful if he is a nominee, let alone a candidate for the office in 1948.

America is not ready for accepting Russian-style politics and Russian ways of living for a while yet. We have three minority groups over here who revelled in everything Wallace said and wrote; but to the other 80 per cent. Americans it didn't go down. His recent resignation from the President's Cabinet was not surprising, not any more than our November Elections, which writes the end of the Roosevelt "New Deal," a slap in the face for the Democratic brand of Politics, which though it didn't surprise Republicans, certainly casts some ominous shadows for 1948. The Republican slogan is simply, "Have you had enough?" And most of us have, yes! "Wallace for President". . . what

a laugh! The Democratic Party is half sunken already . . . we have had enough of Roosevelts, Browders, Tugwells, Wilkies, Wallaces, and Near-Communistic "New Deals" to last forever. And why not Shaw for Ambassador to America, the dear old Boob!

ODDS AND ENDS.—North and South are still at war. 'Twas 1865 when Lee surrendered to Grant, but newspapers of the South still chant "To Hell with the danyankees!"

A new book, "Priestess of the Occult," by Gertrude M. Williams, reviewed as a full expose of Madame Blavatsky and the Theosophical Society ought to knock the socks off most any reader anywhere in the world. We are wondering if the Theosophical University Press at Covina, California, will catalogue and supply this book for its customers. (Are their faces red!)

"Time" magazine's review is too lengthy and thorough to quote. It is our belief this book is a sensation which readers of "The Freethinker" will never enjoy anything better than. We got a delightful glow from this note by the London Society for Psychical Research, issued after a painstaking investigation of Blavatsky's bunksky: "We think she has achieved a title to permanent remembrance as one of the most accomplished, ingenious and interesting imposters in history."

Duke of Windsor and wife robbed mysteriously soon as they hit London. Scotland Yard all at sea. Front page again—news-paper blurbs—visits Prime Minister Attlee—gets no job. So we'll probably get 'em back—curtains! We could never understand why this wondering Playboy doesn't go to his cattle ranch in Canada and disappear. The average American gets a great laugh every time some Society column slosh appears about the charming Duke and his gracious Duchess. So is a wooden shoe.

MORE ODDS, WITHOUT END.—Two Reverends squabble in the Press over a comma in the Apostles' creed; the Rev. A. P. Davies, Unitarian, versus the Rev. A. H. Davies, Presbyterian. "Born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate" the comma representing the important part of Christ's life . . . "after all," argues one, "the life of Christ is something more than a punctuation mark." Jive, that is . . . and what they know about Christ's life shouldn't be a comma, but a question mark.

Someone proposes "a world Memorial for Catholic Soldiers." Nothing surprises us any more.

Mr. Joseph Lewis's book "The Ten Commandments," reviewed by H. Cutner, should appeal to Freethinkers, as it is actually a compendium of learning and erudition having a fund of information second to none. Mr. A. D. Howell-Smith in Literary Guide (R.P.A.) gave a full page review in the September issue, labelled "Uncritical Doodleism," and then cries his eyes out over the job. Nevertheless, if every person in the land had a copy of Lewis's book in the home, the Churches would be empty so much the sooner.

Texas Jack, now 84, the only survivor of the 47 most notorious outlaws of old Indian Territory (now Oklahoma), is writing his memoirs. In 1894 Texas Jack and gang held up the M.K. & T. express train, tried to dynamite the express car, but the only thing they carried away was some of Ledbetter's hot lead, a deputy sheriff who was guarding the car. Jack survived and turned Evangelist. So did Al Jennings, another bad man. So would have Billy the Kid; only they drilled him between the shoulder blades too early in life. Billy *never had a fair chance* to turn Evangelist, or likely he would have.

RICHARD ROE (U.S.A.)

### A MODERN SCHOOL.

MAY I tell your readers some of the difficulties of running an International School based on principles of freethought?

I had a school in London and Paris in 1922 for dancing and painting only, which was a great success. When war broke out in 1939 I had to give it up, and opened this school with only six

pupils, which has very gradually grown. Here the students are boarders and are given a good general education, including languages. We have our own private theatre in which ballet is taught, seriously, by a qualified teacher. So many schools have a little dancing class given by teachers who do not know that to place a child "on points" too early often injures the feet for life, and even the spine, but the parents are satisfied because they wear little fairy dresses and look sweet in a performance which is often very boring.

Drama is also taught seriously, and from every point of view. Painting is also connected with this work, and music—*enrhythmic* being taught to enable the child to learn the theory of music and movement, thereby preventing the usual drudgery. The farm and gardens attached to the school provide the food. The children are taught to ride and at weekends they get out on horses. The very young ones go for pony-and-trap rides. All this parents think is fine, but they are bothered because their own particular brand of religion is not imposed on the child. As there are different nationalities, both of children and staff, there are naturally differing trends of thought, and the children are encouraged to discuss these matters to enable them to form their own conclusions. I have found that this treatment prevents the children from lying and cheating; nor do they behave like little hoodlums. In general, they are trained to use their brains and reason for themselves in a clear, straightforward fashion.

I find that some of the parents give their children an *overdose* of religion in the holidays to make up for what they think they miss here. They like the children being here because of the good food, and the teaching and country amenities generally, but the lack of religion bothers them, and many would-be pupils do not come here only because of that. The children of freethinkers don't need this type of training as badly as do those who are not allowed to come; so that I have either to be dishonest and evade the question entirely with parents of would-be pupils, or have a very limited number.

I have put a lot of money and thought into this school, and have taken over more property in the village, and therefore need more pupils. How on earth is it to be done? How on earth am I to get more freethinkers' children, for instance? This is surely the school for them, if freethinking parents do not want their children poisoned by the various methods orthodox schools have of imposing religion on their minds before they have time to think for themselves.

There has been such a good job of work done with the children already here that I would like to bring this school to the notice of all freethinkers. One daughter of a freethinker who has been here for three years will be a student-teacher next term, and will have outside teaching to do the term after. She has done particularly well because she had the right parents to begin with—where are the other parents of his kind?

KATHLEEN TACCHI-MORRIS.  
(Principal, Tacchomo International School.)

### "TOSS UP"

During a certain race week when every pitman desires to be present at the competition for the "Northumberland Plate" it was deemed desirable that every man at a certain pit should be at work. Two of the turf lovers were, however, determined to go to the races. As they were approaching the course they stopped the master of the colliery approaching. "Now you men, how is this?" he queried. "You ought to be at your work?" "Wey," said one of the delinquents, "we wanted to gan to work sor an' we wanted to cum to the races tee, so we tossed up which we had to be, an' it cam doon for the races." "Oh but that is not very well, but you probably used a two-headed penny." "Sor, it was a fair toss." "Well then, tell me, what did you throw up?" "Wey, we hoyed a brick up. If it stopped up, we went to work; if it cam doon, we went to the races—an' heor we are sor!"

**THE POWER AND THE GORY!**

How nice to be all-Mighty,  
 All-Seeing and all-Good;  
 To know off pat all This and That—  
 (As if one ever could!).

And Oh to be all-Loving,  
 All-Gentle, Kind and True;  
 All-Humble, Meek—and never seek  
 A naughty thing to do.

But just to sit all-Comfy  
 And watch the mad world sink;  
 So long as I was high and dry  
 The other eye I'd wink!

I wouldn't lift a finger  
 To help poor starving Man;  
 Of course I *could*, that's understood,  
 But not *my* kind of plan.

And as for healing sickness,  
 Relieving mortal pain;  
 I wouldn't try—but let 'em die—  
 And go to sleep again!

And why should I be bothered  
 When nations go to war?  
 The silly mutts can spill their guts  
 And wallow in Their gore.

With millions dead and wounded,  
 And thousands homeless, too,  
 Why should I stay the senseless fray?  
 If you were *me*—would *you*?

Don't tell me I am selfish,  
 A cruel So-and-So  
 Who loves to flood the world in blood—  
 My goodness, gracious No!

I hold the power, it's granted,  
 To rid the world of Sin;  
 To make Life sweet—when you entreat—  
 But *why* should I step in?

It gives me satisfaction—  
 Your praise, and prayers as well;  
 So "On your knees!" But when I please  
 I'll send you all to hell!

I love to watch you crawling  
 Like maggots in the cheese;  
 But don't ask why I never try  
 To grant your wishes, please!

Maybe I'm just plain lazy,  
 Or tired—if you insist;  
 Too weak—too much a broken crutch—  
*Maybe I don't exist!!*

W. H. WOOD.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

**RELIGION DEFINED**

In the article "The Fading of Faith," in "The Freethinker" of February 2, there are three definitions of religion given. Not one of them is correct, not even Prof. J. Harvey Robinson's. All this talk about morality, etc., is beside the point. The whole lot of Gods that I have been personally acquainted with has been moral, or anywhere near it. Indeed, you may be aware, one of them actually had his own son slowly tortured to death!

The definition given by Ruskin is certainly good as far as it goes, and in fact I *like* it better than my own, which, however, is simple, concise, and all-embracing, as follows:—

RELIGION—belief in supernatural agency.  
 Comprehensively yours,

ARTHUR HANSON.

**OLD NICK'S APRON**

One of Co. Durham's hoary old legends concerns the history connected with a very large lump of stone lodged in Castle Eden Dene, coupled also with the knowledge that the devil is, when duty demands, not at all above wearing aprons. Old Nick was, it is said, on one occasion in the act of flying over this Dene carrying this immense stone in his apron, when, alas and alack, the apron string snapped, and the weighty burden was precipitated down into the place where it now lies.— E. H. S.

**OBITUARY**

**WALTER COOPER**

With genuine sorrow we record the death of Walter Cooper, of the Royal Signals which took place in Palestine. A promising young man of 20 with a strong character and Free-thought principles he soon found that in the forces those military weaknesses were not encouraged. His claim for exemption from church services was granted and potato peeling was his reward. He was a member of the Blackpool Branch N.S.S. Our deep sympathy goes to the sorrowing parents in their grievous loss, and our movement is the poorer by his death. R. H. R.

**NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY**

**Report of Executive Meeting held April 10, 1947**

The President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, presided.  
 Also present: Messrs. Hornibrook, Rosetti (A.C.), Seibert, Griffiths, Ebury, Lupton, Page, Morris, Barker, Mrs. Grant, Mrs. Quinton, and the Secretary.  
 Minutes of previous meeting read and accepted. New members were admitted to Bradford, Halifax, and to the Parent Society.  
 The Conference Agenda Committee submitted its report which was discussed. Progress in conference arrangements was reported and instructions given. Correspondence from Halifax, Edinburgh, Bradford, Newcastle, and North London Branches was dealt with.  
 The next meeting of the Executive was fixed for May 15, and the proceedings closed. R. H. ROSETTI, General Secretary.

**SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.**

**LONDON—OUTDOOR**

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

**LONDON—INDOOR**

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: "Whither Civilisation," Mr. ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON.

**COUNTRY—OUTDOOR**

Burnley (Burnley Market).—Sunday, April 20, 6-45 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.  
 Cornholme.—Wednesday, April 23, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.  
 Enfield (Barnes Square).—Saturday, April 19, 6-30 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.  
 Nottingham (Old Market Square).—Sunday, April 20, 6-30 p.m.: "What do Christians Believe?" Mr. T. M. MOSLEY.  
 Scoutbottom (Rossendale).—Friday, April 18, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.

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