

THE FREETHINKER

Founded 1881

Editor : CHAPMAN COHEN

Vol. LXVIII.—No. 50.

[REGISTERED AT THE GENERAL
POST OFFICE AS A NEWSPAPER]

Price Threepence

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Superstition

It is proverbial that superstitions die hard. The reason for this is not far to seek. To begin with, the most general beliefs are usually the most primitive, and being primitive they have coloured the thinking of the race, and in a large number of instances have become incarnate in institutions. The consequence is that anyone or anything that runs counter to established superstitions is fighting some of the oldest. More than that, the champion of these beliefs is speaking a language of which the mass of the people do not understand the meaning, but in the case of a popular appeal that is not necessary. All that is required is that the familiar words shall be used, and in perhaps nineteen cases out of twenty, a particular kind of reaction is assured. The Reformer is, on the other hand, addressing his audience in an unfamiliar tongue. They must be familiar with the *words* before they can respond to the ideas that lie behind them. This is, of course, true of almost every subject. It may be more correct to say that superstition is a frame of mind that can attach itself to any subject under the sun. But it is religion that serves as its spawning ground which conserves its operation in all directions.

The two superstitions that show the greatest tenacity to-day are the belief in a future life and in the character of Jesus as an ethical social guide. The first is a very old one, the last is comparatively modern. The Jesus who was primarily an ethical and social reformer was unknown to earlier generations of believers. In a social Jesus, Christians hardly showed the slightest interest. In fact, they went out of their way to enlarge on the other world rather than on the life of to-day. It was Jesus the God incarnate that was all important. It was the development of human society that brought another force to the front, and the character of Jesus was re-formed. He was not the crucified deity put to death in accordance with a plan for saving man's soul. He was no longer the miracle-worker, and the believer in devils. The new Jesus was supposed to be pained at the political and economic injustice of the world, and one who aimed at securing a reign of social justice here, whether there existed a heaven or not. We wonder what those eminent Christian writers, such as John Knox, Calvin, or Wesley would say for the modern Jesus. After all, Christian leaders have never been timid folk, whatever were the brutal and stupid displays they showed in the name of Jesus.

This translation of the historic God into a social reformer was made easy by the fact that the rank and file were always ignorant of the real origin of the historic Jesus. The policy of the Christian Church—or Churches—from the earliest times was to suppress the truth concerning the Christian religion. The strict injunction laid upon believers not to read anti-Christian productions—a policy carried out to-day—made it quite easy for the conviction to grow up that the Jesus of the New Testa-

ment was quite a unique social guide. Thus it has happened that as the Saviour-God weakened, it was replaced by another superstition—that of Jesus as the ideal social and ethical leader of men. If possible this last superstition has been worse than the original one. That had a certain standing in the mythology of mankind, but this later move has nothing on its behalf save the intellectual sluggishness where religion is concerned. In the light of modern thought the Saviour-God is merely an ancient absurdity.

Assuming the reality of Christianity, even then it was behind the times when it is said to have come into being. The crude demonism of Jesus contrasts poorly with the more enlightened views of Greece and Rome. The better educated Greeks were already teaching that disease was due to natural causes and considerable knowledge was afloat concerning the whole nervous system. With Jesus it was always a case of "possession," with cures through the magic of God. The Greeks were teaching the rotundity of the earth and they guessed many things that were afterwards discovered. Christianity stood for a flat earth. There was not in any of the sayings of Jesus the idea of natural thought or science. It would be all to the good if, instead of saying, "Jesus died for me," Christians would read a few books on what science has done for mankind.

What I have been writing is an outcome from two lengthy letters complaining that we are not giving justice to all that Christianity has given to the world. I have read these letters I cannot say with pleasure, because it is not pleasurable to find anyone so far from the facts. To tell people to love one another, that all men are brothers, that God will judge all, that God loves those who obey him, and so forth, are sayings well known everywhere.

I am told that one must not blame Jesus because so many have not followed his advice. But if we are considering his influence, we must face the question of why there has been this conspicuous failure right through the ages. It has not been because the teaching has not been given. To do the Churches justice, they have never ceased to preach these commonplaces to the people, and their lack of value in the determination of conduct for good is seen in the whole of Christian history.

Is it then probable that—assuming the New Testament Jesus to have actually existed—one who was demonstrably so far behind the best knowledge of his day is of so much importance to mankind? Merely to put the question plainly is to make it a clear absurdity. Ethics and sociology are not so divorced from knowledge that one can be developed in the one direction and remain backward in the other. To be filled with the desire to do good is beside the point. That may be found among all classes of people in all ages of the world, and in all stages of culture. But it is not these qualities alone which will entitle anyone to be called a reformer, or a teacher. And it was not his quality as an ethical or social reformer that

made Jesus the figurehead of a religious cult. He was that in virtue of his supernatural character. The early Christians were not moved by the moral maxims of Jesus. Why should they have been? There was nothing new, nothing original in them. Jesus Christ was believed in because of his supernatural character. But to drop the supernatural Christ and to hold up the impossible social reformer is to invite the contempt of all serious-minded men and women.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

A RELIGION FIT FOR FREETHINKERS

OF the innumerable religions, past and present, there are only three fit for Freethinkers. There is Buddhism, pure and freed from its corruptions; there is the high religion of Marcus Aurelius; and, finally, there is the religion of all modern sensible men.

What is this last? The first two are sufficiently well known to the cultivated mind, even in the barbarous British Isles. It is the third that is insufficiently known and considered here.

This is the religion which says: "Be thine own *Deus*," and which makes a man true to himself and his own nature. It is sometimes called Solipsism. "The solipsist," says Mr. Somerset Maugham, "believes only in himself and his experience." Richard Burton expounded it with genius in his "Lay of the Higher Law." And Fray Luis de Leon put it well when he declared: "The beauty of life consists in nothing but this; that each should act in accordance with his nature and his business."

When one looks at any one of these three noble religions, how poor and mean and contemptible and vile seems the pseudo-Christianity of the Churches and their members! Christianity at its best is not the best of religions. And what a shock it is to those brought up in childhood to believe that it is the highest and purest form of truth when in manhood they start exploring other religions of a nobler kind, such as Buddhism and Aurelianism. We needs must prefer the higher when we see it. And set beside the noble ideal of virtue its own and only reward, beside the attitude of fearing nothing and hoping nothing, how infinitely low is the idea of a tinsel bribe of Heaven and a fiery threat of Hell that disgraces the Christian faith. Such bribes and threats are pap for baby-minds.

But let us return to our third religion. It is at least based on reality, not upon tradition or make-believe. What, after all, has any being or existence outside a man's mind? Nothing. If I sleep or die, the very earth that supports me has no existence for me any more than the concept Jesus the Saviour had before I read of him or any future Messiah on Earth can have for me after my death. "Nothing is more to me than myself," said Max Stirner, and he might better have said, "Nothing is anything to me but myself, and in, and through, myself." That would have been naked Truth.

While I am, I want, and even need, a million material and immaterial things. Even an avowed ascetic like that Christian statesman, Sir Stafford Cripps, wants a myriad things. But let us die and we want nothing. It is the living others who want a coffin and a grave for us who are beyond all wants.

In this solipsist religion, the duty to Self comes first, for this is the law of life. Good is done, because good is good to do. But the truth cannot always be known, it can only be sought. "Truth is the shattered mirror strewn in myriad bits while each believes his little bit the whole"; and men's brains, by their very nature,

weave tangled webs of truth and lies. Moreover, what is good, what is evil? These change with place, time, and race, and each vice has worn the diadem of virtue and each virtue the brand of crime in its time. Bigamy was a virtue with Father Abraham and Brigham Young, but you cannot quote their religious example acceptably in defending a bigamist at the Old Bailey to-day.

Thought, after all, is the very life of life, and it is upon thought that this self-religion rests. Yet "on thought itself feed not thy thought." Voltaire said the very last word upon that, and a hundred years later Mr. Bernard Shaw could get no further and say no more, the end of the Black Girl's quest being in substance exactly that found by the immortal Candide: "Let us work without arguing, for that is the only way of rendering life tolerable. We must cultivate our garden." To cultivate the garden, the garden of self and the world—surely human acuteness has reached no further than this simple-seeming truth about life.

It does not mean that the solipsist will hold himself an All-in-All. He knows well enough that perched on an infinitesimal point of time between two Eternities (Shakespeare's the dark backward and abyss of "Time" and even the darker forward and chasm of the Future) he is ignorant of all, even the self and its experience that he studies. His "Now" is all that he has and both he and it are little enough; less than nothing indeed, to the rest.

In a hundred phrases of genius, too little appreciated, the Kasidah eloquently says these things and much more. "The choice and master spirits of that age," Shelley's "chosen spirits," Stendhal's "few," the aristocracy of the mind and heart treasured that book. But the name of Haji Abdu El-Yezdi rings no bell in the modern mind, and the name of Richard Burton is little more than a breath of the desert-wind over modern memories.

Yet hark to the half-forgotten blast of the trumpet:—
"Do what thy manhood bids thee do, from none but
self expect applause,

He noblest lives and noblest dies who makes and
keeps his self-made laws.

All other life is living death. . . ."

At that music the chatter of other religions seems like the tinkling of his camel-bells. Here is a creed fit for those Freethinkers who need a creed.

C. G. L. DU CANN.

FREETHOUGHT IN MEDIEVAL TIMES

WITH his highly interesting and instructive "Medieval Panorama: The English Scene from Conquest to Reformation" (Cambridge University Press, 1938), the late distinguished scholar, Dr. G. G. Coulton, includes a chapter dealing with Freethought in medieval centuries. In this, he exposes flagrant misrepresentations emanating from recent Catholic apologists, and completely exonerates the eminent historian, Dr. H. C. Lea, from charges of inaccuracy when he denounced the appalling cruelty and vindictiveness of the Roman Church.

Doubtless many otherwise well-intentioned men were driven into atrocity by their pitiless creed. For if heresy not only doomed heretics themselves to eternal perdition, but by their impious teachings imperilled the souls of others then, their extirpation was justified, for, as the Church asserted the doctrine of exclusive salvation, therefore, all who denied her claims were destined to endure never-ending torture in hell.

In the days of Roger Bacon, the most celebrated preacher was the Franciscan Berthold of Regensburg

whose eloquent sermons were esteemed for centuries. Apart from his harsh creed, he seems to have been a man of exemplary character, yet he was so demoralised by his beliefs that, in one of his many denunciations of heresy, he declared that: "Had I a sister in a country wherein were only one heretic, yet that one heretic would keep me in fear for her . . . I myself, by God's grace, am as far rooted in the Christian faith as any Christian man should rightly be; yet, rather than dwell knowingly one brief fortnight in the same house with a heretic, I would dwell a whole year with five hundred devils."

Still, despite the alleged inerrancy and omniscience of their Church, doubts constantly tortured the most credulous Christians. As Coulton urges, the Middle Ages were more truly a time of acquiescence than of robust belief. Also, he cites Renan as stressing the far greater prevalence of Freethought in early Islam than in later days, and himself contends that thought was freer among the early Christians than when it became standardised and subjected to dogma by the subsequent institutional Church. He notes that "Justin Martyr, the first of the apologists whose works have come down to us, claims in so many words that Socrates and Heraclitus were Christians, since they lived by reason." But tolerance such as this soon vanished and blind obedience to the behests of the Church became the hall-mark of piety.

Among intellectual men, however, religious unrest constantly occurred. Joinville, an independent and reliable witness, testifies that scepticism among the better informed was much more frequent in the Middle Ages than is usually recognised. He mentions a prelate who was made miserable by his inability to credit the truth of transubstantiation. Again, a man ordinarily so humane as St. Louis was gravely alarmed at the risks incurred by a devout Christian debating with a Jew, while one, he said, who heard a layman speaking disrespectfully of the Christian faith was fully justified in slaying him forthwith.

Arabian and Hebrew influences were largely responsible for the growth of doubt. Ibn Roschd, better known as Averroës, lived from 1126 to 1198. This great thinker exercised a powerful influence over the minds of thoughtful Christians. Coulton contends that he "is not the greatest of the Arabian philosophers, but the last who summed up the work of his predecessors. The Arab culture, of which he is the last flicker, had lasted about 200 years. The Caliph Al Hakem II, who reigned at Cordova from 961 to 976, collected a library reckoned (with probable exaggeration) at 400,000 volumes, and encouraged Christian and Jewish as well as Muslim scholars. That library was destroyed by reactionaries after his death; and for several generations the pendulum swung backwards and forwards between philosophical and ecclesiastical tradition, so that Averroës was provoked into writing: 'Of all the tyrannies the worst is the tyranny of the priest.' He himself, for religious reasons, was deprived of his position as judge."

Unfortunately, the secular rulers were intimidated by zealous Moslems. Thus, speculation was penalised. priceless manuscripts were destroyed by sovereign decree, and the light fading in Arabian domains, Christendom alone was illuminated by the culture and philosophy of an incinerated Arabian literature. As Renan avers: "Arab philosophy furnishes an almost unique instance of a very lofty culture suppressed almost instantaneously without leaving any trace

behind, so that it was almost forgotten by the nation that had begotten it."

By this medieval period there was an awakening among intellectuals in Western Europe and the teachings of Arabian philosophers had penetrated scholastic circles, especially in the University of Paris. The speculative writings of Moslem thinkers were translated by cultured Jews from Arabic into Latin. Ecclesiastical condemnations of Averroistic teachings were occasionally promulgated, for these doctrines virtually denied the world's creation and postulated the eternity of the material Universe. In the thirteenth century, the then Bishop of Paris produced several refutations of these disturbing doctrines after their favourable reception in the University, then the most influential in Europe. The scandalised Bishop complains that: "Many men swallow these conclusions, taking them without investigation by discussion or criticism." While later, it is evident from Aquinas and others, that these concepts were still embraced by University teachers and students. Aquinas avers that these impious theories are circulated in holes and corners and secretly poison the minds of the young. But as Dr. Coulton observes: "An Averroist would have answered that this concealment was natural enough, considering the activity of the Inquisition."

Stern condemnations of heterodox teachings appeared in 1277, so the sceptics devised a plan with which their assailants could be circumvented. This consisted in the contention that although certain propositions were false theologically, they were nevertheless true philosophically, and vice-versa. This system, that of the double truth, was utilised fairly successfully by the rich and influential throughout the Medieval centuries.

If compelled to equivocate and compromise, the sceptical spirit still stalked abroad. This is more than suggested by Dante's circle in hell populated by over 1,000 souls of those who had denied immortality while on earth. Moreover, Petrarch assures us that blasphemy and profanity were fashionable in Italy where philosophers pour scorn and contempt on the teachings of Christ. "Such kind of talk, he tells us," notes Coulton, "was fashionable among the upper classes in Venice; but it was especially popular in the University of Paris. About this time the great University of Padua became a focus of Averroism, especially in the medical school."

This Freethinking movement spread throughout the intellectual centres of northern Italy and, in the opening years of the sixteenth century it had almost become the peninsula's philosophy. So widespread was scepticism that the doctrines of Averroës invaded the Papal Court itself when, in the reign of the Medicean Pope, Leo X, the problem of the soul's immortality was solemnly debated by the assembled prelates.

Freethought of varied shades pervaded the Renaissance, but became almost eclipsed in the turmoil that accompanied the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation that succeeded. Bruno and other true reformers perished in the flames; Galileo and other innovators were bitterly persecuted and reduced to silence and obscurity. But the fight went on and, in the eighteenth century, the Age of Reason was reached at last.

During the Middle Ages, however, the social and religious heresies that arose among the poor and oppressed were remorselessly stamped out. Even in England, the Lollards were almost exterminated, while in France the Albigenses were the victims of wholesale slaughter. The tragedy of priestridden Spain where a

large section of the most industrious and intellectual of its inhabitants suffered death or exile is a terrible blot on the escutcheon of the Church. Well may the Catholic, Lord Acton, declare that the Liberal spirit of recent times "swept away that appalling edifice of intolerance, tyranny and cruelty which believers in Christ built up to perpetuate their belief."

T. F. PALMER.

RATIONALISM IN AMERICA

RATIONALISM in America, although not nearly as strong as in England, is nevertheless a powerful force which is steadily growing in the number of adherents. Rationalism here centers around three main groups. The group most nearly comparable to the Rationalist Press Association is the American Humanist Association, or the humanists. Then there are the Freethinkers of America. And finally we have our friends the out and out atheists of the Truth Seeker Company.

"The Truth Seeker" is the journal published every month by the Truth Seeker Company. It is, by the way, the oldest freethought paper in the world, being founded in 1873. Much of its material is of a very definite anti-religious type, and some rather negative in this respect. Much very good work in fighting the attempts of religious authorities to foist religious doctrines upon public school education, contrary to the United States Constitution, is done by this group, who, in April of 1946, formed the National Liberal League. One of the first steps of this organisation was to financially aid Mrs. Vashti McCollum in her brave and much publicised fight against religious doctrines being imposed upon her son. President of this League is Marshall J. Gauvin, who left his home in Winnipeg and his work with the Winnipeg Humanist Society to join the League in New York City. Charles Smith, who edits "The Truth Seeker," has also written the lively leaflet "The Bible in the Balance," which is the most effective repudiation of the Bible that I've ever seen; it is a thorough and painstaking collection of all the errors and contradictions and downright evil writings pertinent to the author's theme to be found in this book.

The American Association for the Advancement of Atheism is another name for this group, in some of their activities.

The Freethinkers of America are more moderate in their ideas, as expressed mainly in "The Freethinker," a monthly journal published by this group. Editor of this journal is Joseph Lewis, who is also head of a free-thought publishing firm. Thus editorship is often a rush job, as a labour of love. Much valuable material of a scientific nature and with a constructively anti-religious taint to it, is reprinted here. A notable example was the article "Science and the Supernatural" by Dr. A. J. Carlson, then President of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. The present writer will always retain a soft spot in his heart for Joseph Lewis, for it was in "The Freethinker" that his first article was published for science and against religious superstition; and the stream has been long and steady ever since in this journal. Of these, "Adventures in Thought" proved most popular.

Himself the author of many rationalist books, Joseph Lewis is America's foremost champion of Robert Ingersoll and Thomas Paine. Through his journal he wages a constant fight against religious authorities who seek to force religion into the army or navy, and there are several single-handed victories to his credit, such as

when the Secretary of the United States Navy issued orders that compulsory religious attendance of navy personnel was illegal and must be stopped, following the publication of a powerful attack against this practice by Joseph Lewis in his journal. Church interference in public school education is another continual target for attack in "The Freethinker."

Although both the National Liberal League and the Freethinkers of America are situated together in the city of New York, neither seems to ever take notice of the other in their respective periodicals. Neither seems to ever rejoice in the other's victories. And this seems to me to be such a pity, for both have similar aims in common against a common enemy: religious superstition. More important, both seek to uphold the personal worth and dignity of the individual human being in a world all too hostile in reality to this ideal, in a world which seems to me to make the friendly encouragement of each group by the other very imperative.

Edwin Wilson is the guiding force behind the American Humanist Association. His quarterly journal "The Humanist" is more like "The Literary Guide" than either of the other two periodicals mentioned, both in actual format and in content. Although this journal takes a strong stand against religious encroachments upon public education, its whole tone is much more subdued than that of the other two. Its editor is a Unitarian minister, which is sufficient explanation. Many good articles by such leading American thinkers as John Dewey, Alfred Korzybski, Harry Elmer Barnes, Prys Hopkins and A. J. Carlson have appeared in this quarterly, although it has its own sphere of humanist authors who regularly appear therein. And sometimes I get lost in the seemingly faraway controversies over the Neo-Thomists, or some such group. Who are they, anyway? But the journal is steadily growing in its readership, with a present publication total of three thousand and two hundred copies. Recently a Managing Editor, Alfred Stienotte, was added to this growing periodical to assist Edwin Wilson as Editor.

But America seems to lack the support, the keen and active and aggressive and above all the permanent and ever present support, for its freethinkers and humanists, of such men as the rationalists in England have in Julian Huxley, Bernard Shaw, the late H. G. Wells, J. B. S. Haldane, and others, national and world figures in their own right in other fields. And here America is sadly the loser. Again, American humanism lacks the power of a publishing firm which is strong in its own right, outside the field of humanism alone, which, of course, the Rationalist Press Association in England enjoys. Nevertheless, America's humanist and freethinking leaders are sincere and hard working men—men, for there seem to be no Marjorie Bowens writing here—and, in Joseph Lewis especially, they've shown that they can press a very aggressive and prolonged attack against bigotry and superstition home to a final victory. With such men, humanism and freethought in America can move but one way: forward.

GEORGE CAULFIELD.

THERE WAS ONCE—

A THINKER. • Because he dared to oppose the superstitious beliefs of the masses, the whole community set upon him and stoned him to death—for even the ignorant can be bold when they are many.

"He was not fit to live amongst us!" they cried. And they spoke more truly than they knew.

W. H. WOOD.

THE TEMPLE

IN Egypt, land of ancient mystery and misery, where man, in his ignorance of how to combat his enemies, turned, as he thought, to the gods, but, in fact, only to the priests, there were, as we all know, many temples, whose ruins have become the wonder of many ages. One of these was Kom Ombo, dedicated, at least partly, to the worship of the crocodile.

Now the crocodile is a most uncharming product of the gods, or of evolution, and we need merely to know its general nature to be able to explain its worship in Egypt, the land of a great river, once thickly infested with the creature. It has, among its evil propensities, one especially bad habit, that of lying on the banks of rivers looking like a mere lump of wood, and all the prayers of all the ages have, as yet, been unable to break that deceitful custom.

The supplications of even the good St. Francis could, in this respect, have been of no avail. Crocodiles, were he ever to have addressed them, might have answered him in a manner similar to that used on the famous occasion when, after preaching to the Crusaders in the Holy Land, the saint went over to the other camp, and sermonised the Sultan. The latter is reported to have heard him patiently, and to have said, when the sermon was done, that he would willingly have embraced the Christian faith, but could not do so at that precise moment, for he had certain weighty matters to array.

Now the crocodile is extremely quick, so that when, let us say, you, my friend, having thought it inanimate, become suddenly aware that it is alive, and seek to flee, it could have you in its jaws before you could say "Oaris," or even "Sobk." Then you are usually of no earthly use, except to the crocodile. It is also immensely strong, and, owing to the toughness of its hide, not very vulnerable. So it is, you see, a treacherous and fearful enemy. Moreover, it is equally at ease, and can travel long distances, on land and in water. Its fierceness is pre-eminent among the animals, and, once looked in its grip, its victim is usually beyond aid.

No wonder then, that it was feared by the early inhabitants of the fertile valley of the Nile, and that they tried to propitiate it.

Now, before returning to Kom Ombo in particular, it is well to have in mind that the lighting of Egyptian temples presents problems differing considerably from those posed in a normally cloudy country, for in Egypt sunshine may be a definite evil. Accordingly, the builders aimed to admit only that light which was necessary for priest and worshipper to see their way; that means that temples were intentionally dark for comfort's sake, which does not, of course, imply that they were dark for no other reason, for example, the practice of the mysteries, because, also for that, darkness is a necessity.

Now the lighting problem was solved by the Egyptian architects; at first, by making long horizontal slits at the tops of the walls immediately below the ceiling. Afterwards they often admitted the light through an opening in the roof, which was often wide on the outside and narrowed downward to a smaller aperture where the light entered the chamber. In both cases there was what we might call a dim religious light.

This dim religious light was essential to the cult of the god, and especially where that was of the dead. The brilliant glare of the sun on the sand without, compared with the light within, made a striking contrast. One entered from the external world of heat, toil and strife, to the chambers of holy peace, where reigned coolness, peace and rest.

Now the temple of Kom Ombo was peculiar in several ways, and if you wish to know more about this temple or of other Egyptian temples, you may turn to Miss Margaret Murray's book, "Egyptian Temples" (Sampson Low, Marston & Co. Ltd., London), to which I am here much indebted. There is only one of its peculiarities described by her with which I am here concerned. It is that of the central one of several chambers situated at the north end of its inner ambulatory. This one lies in the axis of the temple, and, to use Miss Murray's words, "is peculiarly interesting," for in the floor is a movable stone, which, when raised, gives admittance to an underground passage beneath the wall dividing two sanctuaries. This passage was connected by an opening in its roof with another passage in the thickness of the same wall. An opening in the roof of the second passage led to a third passage on a higher level; in other words, there were in the one wall three levels of passages, one above the other, entirely hidden from those in front of the sanctuaries, and of which the secret entrance could have been known only to the priests. These facts, writes Miss Murray, suggest that the passages were used as a means of impressing the ignorant peasants who worshipped in the temple, and making them believe in miraculous voices and visions. The priest could enter the room at the back of one sanctuary, and then appear unexpectedly above the third ante-chamber, having passed, apparently, through roofs and walls; he could also speak without being seen, and so give the oracle of the god to an anxious inquirer. This simple explanation of the mystery which must have surrounded Kom Ombo is, the author states, probably true of so-called miraculous performances in the sacred places of every religion in the world.

So, in sober truth, it must be that the crocodile in the river, and the priest in the temple, give the lie to the optimistic philosophy that all things are for the best in the best of possible worlds, meaning this world. To quote an eminent Victorian, T. H. Huxley, that philosophy is "really only another instance to be added to the many extant, of the audacity of *a priori* speculators who, having created God in their own image, find no difficulty in assuming that the Almighty must have been actuated by the same motives as themselves."

Well, it is certainly a terrible thing to contemplate, that a god created the crocodile, which, by its nature, cannot help but prey upon the life that, by similar compulsion, must frequent its haunts. Then it is another terrible object of contemplation, also to find that the channels of communication with the creating deity are blocked by the fraudulent contrivances of men, whom he has appointed to defraud; and to defraud those whom the god has rendered apt for being defrauded.

But then it is a beautiful thing to realise that, although crocodiles and fraudulent priests are real, the Lord God is but a figment of imagination. By ridding the latter of god we rid ourselves also of fraudulent priests. The crocodiles are possibly with us always; but when we no longer spend our time praying in temples, we have more to spend in facing the problem of how to combat crocodiles, or the many other difficulties of our lives.

J. G. LUPTON.

AND REMEMBER THAT . . .

Hell hath her cloisters for
The little saints of Flies;
Heaven hath her graveyard for
Faint-hearted at harp who dies.

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

ACID DROPS

The "Daily Herald" informs us that Cardinal Griffin is of the opinion that "it is the duty of Catholics to get into politics and work from within." The reader of the "Freethinker" who drew attention to the report, comments: "The Cardinal did not say which party. The Pope was more definite during the Italian Elections, when he threatened with ex-communication all those who did not vote for the Catholic controlled Party."

The Roman Catholic Church is one of the most adaptable of organisations the world has ever known. It will support all, and any organisation on condition that the interests of the Church are safeguarded. F. A. Ridley, whose series of articles on "The Evolution of the Papacy" are appearing in these columns every week deals in detail with the many various papal encyclicals.

The Bishop of London recently gave an address in Cambridge on Anglicanism, in which he tried to show what that very elastic creed really was. It appears that true Anglicanism was both Evangelical and Catholic and in it, Fundamentalism is very "insignificant." Anglicanism was not ashamed "of a quasi-physical conception of Grace, transmitted through the Sacraments," though for Evangelical Anglicans there was "a different explanation of Grace." At the moment, however, the synthesis between Evangelicism and Catholicism in Anglicanism "seems far away." A richer synthesis would come in God's good time. Moreover, Anglicanism "was nearer to New Testament religion than any other form of Christianity." As for the wide differences of opinion in "interpretation," this should make the "comprehensiveness" of Anglicanism all the more valued. We hope our readers now know what Anglicanism really is!

The "Universe" is asking, "What has gone wrong with the Christian Co-operation Movement?" It certainly began with terrific enthusiasm, and crowds filled one of the biggest theatres with Christians of all creeds ready to mass together in prayer for Christ's sake and fight the wicked infidel off the face of the earth. The "Sword and the Spirit" which was Roman Catholic was joined by "Religion and Life," its non-Catholic equivalent; and now, sad to relate, both if not quite dead, are certainly dying. They hold very few meetings and can barely attract a small audience. All this is very puzzling to earnest Christians, for either the Holy Spirit is guiding them or it is not—and if not, why?

One reason, we are told, is that the Hierarchy in this country is not favourable to co-operation with non-Catholics—unless, of course, they "come in." Another reason may be that while Catholics and non-Catholics must pray to God Almighty, they cannot do it at the same time in the same hall. Still another reason may be that it is very difficult to get a fervent Roman Catholic and an equally fervent Protestant to love each other, for there is nothing like true Christianity to engender genuine hate. But perhaps the best reason, carefully hidden from the sheep, is that the work of Free-thought, though boycotted and despised by all Goddites, is still doing its work so effectively that even the bravest Christian Commandos have been obliged to retire baffled and defeated.

Even in America, the home of 20 or 30 million Catholics, the battle is raging so hotly that Romanist bishops and cardinals have issued a warning that

"Secularism is the most deadly menace to our Christian and American way of life." If American life is as depicted on American films, there certainly is precious little religion—though at the same time it is only fair to point out that whenever some of the most violent criminals and murderers in these films are in prison, they are always shown to be most pathetically Roman Catholic.

In any case, "Secularism," reports the "Universe," "in America, has scored unprecedented victories in its opposition to governmental encouragement of religious and moral training . . . the destroyers are definitely a minority and yet the work of destruction goes on." This victory of Secularism in a vast country like the U.S.A., which is flooded with religious literature of all kinds and backed by a hundred different brands of the most childish religious beliefs, is something we can indeed be proud of—and may the good work continue.

The Home Secretary needs help to fight the crime wave. We do not know whether Mr. Ede has asked God for any help, but God's representative, Dr. Garbett, Archbishop of York, has accepted an invitation to help, according to the "Daily Express." We are not so sure that the Archbishop's help will amount to much, for all he could suggest is that the Home Secretary should "strengthen the Police Force," and he had to admit that his influence was not so great, for "Sunday after Sunday we only reach a minority of the people, the vast majority no longer pay attention to what is said by the Churches." This being the case, and we have every reason for believing it, we ought to expect a resignation on the part of the Archbishop as being "redundant," and a consequent increase in the State's revenue by his salary of £10,000.

Although England is always considered a Christian country the work of "evangelisation" must still be carried on and, at the moment, Dr. Walter Carey, assisted by various people, is doing his utmost to bring Christ to our villages. During October, 41 villages had to sustain a campaign suggested by Lord Montgomery at Alamein—reconnoitre, shock troops, follow-up, and consolidation. According to Dr. Carey, the Holy Spirit is in charge at every stage, and the "results are enheartening." It appears to us, however, that the Holy Spirit is having a very easy victory, for obviously the villagers were already Christians.

What we should like to see is the Holy Spirit sending his shock troops to evangelise the National Secular Society. That would be a victory worth boasting about—but for some reason or other, Dr. Carey fights shy of meeting any foemen worthy of the Holy Spirit's steel. Perhaps both—Dr. Carey and the Holy Spirit—hate getting defeated, and their brave shock troops utterly routed. And that certainly would be their fate in an encounter with the N.S.S.

William Gallacher, M.P., in a letter to "The Times" asserts that ". . . no Church Leader would ever take it upon himself to defend the Capitalist system of society . . ." But Mr. Gallacher is careful to add "if he seriously accepts the New Testament" teaching. We are always a little diffident when trying to teach grandmother to suck—acid drops, but would really like to know what church leader has *not* supported the capitalist system, and we give our Wullie his Red Dean who thinks that the Communist system will lead to God.

"THE FREETHINKER"

Telephone No.: Holborn 2601.

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

TO CORRESPONDENTS

Mr. and Mrs. Potter, Essex.—Thanks, We, too, have noticed that whenever Thomas Paine is mentioned, great care is taken that his "Age of Reason" is not referred to.

A. K. Brixton.—For "The Freethinker," 2s. 6d.

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 connection 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 should reach the Office by Friday morning

SUGAR PLUMS

The National Secular Society's Annual Dinner which had to be discontinued during the war will be revived on Saturday, January 29, next, at The Criterion Restaurant, Piccadilly-Circus, London, W. 1. Besides the dinner there will be a first-class musical programme, and speeches, and, of course, a reception at which Freethinkers from all parts of the country can exchange views. Accommodation is limited, so an early application for tickets is necessary. Tickets are 12s. 6d. each and cash must accompany applications to the General Secretary, 41, Grays Inn Road, London, W.C. 1. Vegetarians should notify with application.

We are pleased to record very good sales for Mr. William Kent's "Lift Up Your Heads," copies being asked for at many well known booksellers. Recently, Mr. Kent lectured in Nottingham on the Shakespeare problem, and impressed some of his audience favourably with his contention that the real writer of most of the plays was Edward de Vere, the Earl of Oxford. In addition, "Lift Up Your Heads" appears to have made not a few converts to Freethought. Here are two extracts from letters recently received by him:—

"A Mr. G. has kindly sent me a copy of the Shakespeare de Vere pot pourri, and tells me in the accompanying letter that not only did you convert him to acceptance of the Oxford hypothesis but you knocked Jehovah out of his head, too. Your little book, 'Lift Up Your Heads' which I have had great pleasure in reading, did it. Mr. G. is now what he describes as a 'near Atheist'." L.R.F.

"I have read through your Anthology, and have to report that, from a practising Anglican, I have now changed to a near Atheist. This is becoming a little confusing. It leads me to realise the millions whose belief will remain because it will not be called upon to stand the test. Your book should be published as a supplement to every Bible, and your twenty questions (to orthodox Shakespeareans) included in the introduction to every 'Complete Works of Shakespeare.' That will be the day!" W.G.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti will speak for the West London Branch N.S.S. to-day (December 12) in The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, London, W.1;

the subject is "God or Man?" and the proceedings begin at 7-15 p.m. We hear excellent reports of the work being done by the Branch and the quality of its lecture syllabus; it deserves all the support that can be given.

Manchester readers will be able to hear Mr. J. T. Brighton to-day (December 12) when he speaks for the local N.S.S. Branch in the Chorlton Town Hall, All Saints, at 6-30 p.m., on "Will Christ Save Us?" Mr. Brighton is a very hard-working and well-experienced Freethought advocate with a humorous turn which makes him a popular speaker. Admission is free.

The Kingston Branch has now brought its Outdoor propaganda season to a close. Mr. J. Barker, President of the Branch, reports a very successful season, and plans for next season are being discussed. Friends in the area willing to help can communicate with Mr. Barker, c/o of "The Freethinker".

THE PAPACY AND FASCISM

"Mussolini was the man sent by providence."—Pope Pius XI. December 20, 1926.

UPON November 7, 1917, the Russian people carried through a revolution which placed the Bolshevik Party in power and installed an anti-capitalist régime in Russia (The Czar had already been forced to abdicate the previous February). The Russian Revolution set in motion a wave of social revolution which swept over the Western World, and in its (Communist) Russian form quickly took an openly anti-religious attitude in consonance with the Marxist materialist views officially professed by the Bolsheviks. (It must be remembered that in Czarist Russia the Orthodox Church was virtually a part of the Czarist autocracy.)

It is now evident in retrospect that the era of social revolution which began in 1917 has now succeeded the era of the French Revolution as the fundamental bugbear of the Catholic Church. In the twentieth century "Communism" is mentioned in various Papal Encyclicals quite as much as "Liberalism" was in those of the nineteenth century. But at first this was not apparent. There had been an enmity of long standing between the rival theocracies of Rome and Moscow, and the Vatican, at first welcomed the overthrow of the heretical and persecuting Czars; "A Divine judgment," the then Papal Secretary of State, Cardinal Gasparri, told a visiting English Catholic.

But this feeling of good-will did not last long. The wave of social revolution promulgated by the Communist International spread too fast across the troubled post-war world and assumed too openly anti-religious forms. Rome soon came to the frame of mind in which she adheres to-day, in the calculations of the Papacy Communism came to occupy the place occupied in by-gone ages by such former enemies of the church as the Albigenses, the Calvinists and the Freemasons.

This change of attitude on the part of the Papacy can be dated officially from the accession of Pius XI (Achille Ratti) to the Papal Throne early in 1922. For this very able and ultra-reactionary Pontiff had been Papal Nuncio at Warsaw in 1920 when the Bolshevik "Red" Army had advanced to the gates of the Polish capital.

Thereafter Cardinal Ratti devoted his life to fighting the "Red Peril" from the Communist East. Since his

election as Pope in 1922 the Church has energetically pursued his policy, which Ratti's successor and former Secretary of State, Eugenio Piacelli (Pope Pius XII) is pursuing to-day with redoubled vigour.

Pius XI (1922-30) reorganised the Church in order to meet the Communist menace; in particular he was the founder of "Catholic Action," to the activities of which it will again be necessary to refer. But at the time when Pope Pius commenced his new anti-communist policy, "Catholic Action" was barely hatched, and the official Catholic parties, like the German "Centre" Party or the Italian "Peoples" Party were too much out of date and loosely organised to hope to make a successful stand against the highly organised, fanatical and politically ruthless Communist Parties backed by the Russian Colossus:

"New times, new manners"—and old tactics! In this dilemma the Pope and his advisers fell back on the old Catholic tactic of making a "marriage of convenience," of forming an alliance with a secular ally, and of using this ally as a "sword" to eradicate contemporary "heresy" by force. It should be pointed out that this tactic was not a new one, contrarily, it was the traditional tactic of the Papacy which it has actually used over and over again. The "Holy" Roman Empire, the Norman Crusaders, the French and Spanish Kings, the "Holy Alliance," are all cases in point. The Papal-Fascist alliance was of the same kind.

From 1922, the date, both of the accession of Pius XI and of Mussolini's "March on Rome," to 1945, the date of the fall of the Fascist Empires in Europe and Asia at the end of the Second World War, we observe a complete era in Papal and, since the Vatican is a world-power, in world-politics, the era of Catholic-Fascist alliance.

The details of this still so recent, and in the Latin world still existing, era can be found set out with appropriate detail in Avro Manhattan's important book "The Catholic Church against the 20th Century," more concisely in Dr. L. H. Lehman's recent valuable study "The Vatican Policy in the Second World War," and perhaps the present writer may be permitted in this connection to mention his own earlier (1937) book "The Papacy and Fascism." The appropriate details in the Roman-Fascist alliance can be found in these and similar books; here the necessary limits of space imposed by this short thesis limit us to a consideration of the fundamental philosophy and strategy of this alliance.

In the first place there were several kinds of Fascism and the reactions of the Vatican towards each, and its consequent degree of collaboration towards each, differed considerably. To ignore such differences is merely to imitate the cruder type of Left wing writers who use the word "Fascist" as an indiscriminate term of abuse wherewith to brand anything they dislike; as in fact, a sort of universal "Esperanto" of crime!

Actually there were three kinds of Fascism, and the attitude of the Papacy differed markedly towards each. Firstly, there was the Clerical-Fascism, Catholic in environment, ideology, and inspiration, of Franco and Salazar in Spain and Portugal, of Dollfuss and Schusnigg in pre-war Austria, of Peron in the Argentine, and of Petain in (Vichy) France: with all these 100 per cent. Catholic régimes, past and present, the Vatican was and is 100 per cent. united, ideologically and politically, for they all represent the beau idéal of Roman sociology, its "Christian Corporate State."

Secondly, there was the type of Fascism, personified by Mussolini's Italy, which arose in a Catholic atmosphere, but was largely inspired by the non-Catholic ideals

of pre-Christian Pagan Rome. On the whole, the Vatican worked cordially with Mussolini, the quotation at the head of this Chapter testifies to that! And we do not forget the Lateran Treaty (1929) which restored a modified version of the Temporal Power and replenished the Vatican treasury, but notwithstanding, there were certain clashes between the two totalitarian régimes. The Papacy heartily approved of Mussolini's wholesale extirpation of the parties of the Left, it kept quiet about the murder of the Socialist leader, Matteotti, and it backed up the Italian conquest of "heretical" Ethiopia, and, of course, the Italian intervention in Spain.

But there was friction over the Fascist monopoly of education, the Pope did not like the Fascist high-handed suppression of his pet movement "Catholic Action," and the Papacy never completely trusted Mussolini; after all, he had once been an atheist—a habit which sticks!—and had once written that excellent little Anarchist pamphlet entitled "God does not exist."

Last, but in power politics the reverse of least, there was non-Christian Fascism; entirely pagan in Japan, largely pagan in Hitler's Germany. Although the German Dictator repeatedly declared his admiration for the historic role of the Catholic Church, and even though the Nazi movement itself originated in Catholic Bavaria, we must not forget that there was a strong openly anti-Christian Pagan wing of Nazism, and in its marriage and family ethics the Nazi Reich was flatly opposed to Catholicism.

In the case of Pagan Fascism the Church probably limited its approval to the destructive aspect of Fascism, in which Germany was its most potent "sword," it backed Hitler against Communist Russia and Liberal France, and Japan against Chinese Communism. But the positive ideals of the Cross and the Swastika differed too widely to be permanently harmonised. Had Hitler won his war and succeeded in his gigantic gamble for world power, as far as the Vatican was concerned there would probably have been a struggle for power, the Nazi "Third Reich" would probably have repeated the stormy history of the "First Reich," the Holy Roman Empire. However, history never allowed the question to rise.

The elemental reasons for the Catholic-Fascist alliance are obvious enough. In my book, "The Papacy and Fascism," I have cited nine fundamental aspects of human action and thought in which the two authoritarian systems run parallel.*

Here it will be sufficient to mention the more important points of identity, or close similarity.

Both Fascism and Roman Catholicism are authoritarian, the infallible Pope and the Dictator who is always right, intolerant of opposition, and backward-looking in their social ideals. Both find their ideal in the Past, both are anti-evolutionary in practice and theory; above all, both have the same enemies, the forward looking movements in ethics, economics and in politics, and both are totalitarian and seek to dominate every sphere of human life. The Gestapo and the Japanese Law against "dangerous thoughts" are the Fascist equivalents of the Inquisition.

Such are the main causes for the Clerical-Fascist alliance which lasted from 1922 to 1945. One further point may be added, both Catholicism and Fascism are essentially demagogic in their tactics. Here the Church, and in particular, the Jesuits, were first in the field. Fascist strategy and propaganda owe much to their Jesuit masters. Hitler and Goebbels, in particular, well

* "The Papacy and Fascism" pp. 166-168.

qualified for honorary membership of the famous Order founded by St. Ignatius Loyola, "For the greater glory of God"—and counter revolution.

However, the great Fascist gamble failed. The Papal "sword" failed to subdue the communist, liberal and secular foes of Holy Church. In 1945 the Papal "marriage of convenience" with Fascism was ended by death. But the Vatican did not perish with its secular ally. With the matchless tenacity in which Christian Rome recalls its Pagan original, the Church in the post-Fascist world continued its search for new weapons with which to lay low the secular enemies of the ecclesiastical Empire of the successors of the Caesars.

F. A. RIDLEY.

A DOCTOR ON RELIGION

III

IT is quite impossible fully to deal with the Epistles of Paul in a short article, and it can be admitted at the outset that for most Christian critics four of these Epistles, namely, Romans, First and Second Corinthians, and Galatians, are "genuine." That is, they claim these four to be the undoubted work of Paul—the Saul of Acts. If the more candid of these critics are pressed further, they will admit that at least some parts of even these four are under suspicion. Naturally, little of this is even hinted at by Dr. Rendle Short who, in his small book "Why Believe?" is content to point out that Corinthians is "authentic" and that being so, there must have been a God Jesus who rose from the dead, having been seen alive after his Crucifixion by "five hundred witnesses, many still living." If Paul had said five thousand or even five millions Dr. Short would have appealed to him in exactly the same way. Paul is just as confidently appealed to by some of our reverent Rationalists though they hasten very much to give up the Resurrection. For them, it is the "Man" Jesus or the man (only) Jesus who really lived. I have never been able to get a clear picture of what either the Man or the man Jesus really did from their writings.

One point has always puzzled me. What is the evidence that Saul of the Acts, after he changed his name to Paul, really wrote anything at all? There is no mention of his sending various Epistles to different "churches" in Acts—as far as I remember—and it has always seemed to me that the only reason why Christian and reverent Rationalist writers appeal to the Epistles as Paul's is because the Christian Church has always maintained it.

Another curious thing is that Paul is supposed to have been a pious Jew converted after being a bitter persecutor of Christians. No writings could be less "Jewish" than those attributed to him. As Gerald Massey pointed out in one of his little known lectures, these writings are completely Gnostic in their tendency, and they have been edited and re-edited to make them conform to the current Christianity.

Paul was actually a Gnostic opponent of the Christianity of a "man" Jesus—his own "Christ" being a God who resided in Heaven. I cannot go into Massey's clever argument just now, and, of course, it would have no appeal either to Dr. Short or his Rationalist supporters. But any reader who is interested in the problem of Paul should read the article in the "Encyclopaedia Biblica," written by Prof. van Manen, or the "Origins of Christianity," by Thomas Whittaker.

In any case, it should not be forgotten even if the contention that Saul really did write Epistles can be shown, that he never saw Jesus "in the flesh," that he never heard the wonderful teachings so generously distributed by Jesus while he went about "doing good," and that he insisted "The Gospel which was preached of me is not after man for I neither received it of man neither was I taught it." Paul's "conversion" was the result of a hallucination, and anybody who studies Christian theology with an unbiased mind must see that it, too, is pure, unadulterated hallucination.

Only the close student of the Bible knows how the narrative of Acts and Paul constantly contradict one another. You can be quite certain that if one says "yes," the other says "no." For example, when Paul was converted Acts say that his companions stood speechless. Paul says, they were all fallen. Acts says that they heard a voice; Paul says they did not. Acts says that after his conversion he "straightway" preached Christ in the synagogues; Paul says in Galatians he neither conferred with flesh and blood nor went to Jerusalem; on the contrary, he went to Arabia and did not go to Jerusalem for three years. And though Acts shows him to be constantly preaching to the Jews, he himself declared that he was "the Apostle of the Gentiles." This is very amusing when one comes to read in Galatians that it was Peter who was the Apostle of the Jews. Yet Peter declared in Acts that this was nonsense, for "the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the Gospel."

Christian critics are in great disagreement as to what Paul really meant at all, and an aristocratic believer, the Duke of Somerset, in his "Christian Theology and Modern Scepticism," sums up the general opinion that "there is scarcely a single passage in the Pauline Epistles or a single doctrine in the Pauline theology which is not darkened or embroiled by the ambiguity of the expression." What else could be expected from Gnostic documents edited and altered to suit some primitive type of Christianity?

Needless to add, however, that all this kind of criticism is hastily brushed aside by your true believer. How can argument cope with a trusting and childlike Faith? Christians as a rule—I mean the sheep, of course—never read criticisms of Paul. I doubt whether any of them would understand any keen discussion of the sort, and in any case they can always fall back upon Jesus. Not Paul but Jesus is a cry that has long been heard.

Anybody familiar with what are called Christian evidences will know the line taken by any believer to prove not merely that Jesus was a Man (or a man) but also God Almighty. How can that "beloved physician" Luke make any mistake when writing about Jesus? How absurd is the suggestion that if Jesus spoke as the Synoptics make him speak, he could not have spoken as John relates. "The objection does not appear very weighty," Dr. Short says. Moreover, John was a "Palestinian Jew," so of course he knew exactly how Jesus spoke in Greek. Personally, I have come across no evidence that either Paul or John was a Jew—it certainly cannot be adduced from the greater part of their writings. In any case, Dr. Rendle settles the matter quite neatly. "There is no serious dispute as to the unity and integrity of the Gospels, or as to the general reliability of the text"—no serious dispute! The thousands of books written about the Gospels during the past 200 years are almost entirely in agreement. Why any further books are written at all, is, I suppose, a Christian "mystery." If there is no serious dispute, why has Dr. Rendle written again? Merely to reassure a few pious sheep who may be wavering just a little?

The writers of the Gospels simply could not have "invented" them—so they must be true. One wonders who invented the "many" Gospels mentioned by the writer of Luke as existing before he commenced to write his Gospel. And who says that the four Gospels in our New Testament are the genuine ones? It is, of course, the Roman Catholic Church; and so far it has produced no evidence whatever to substantiate its claim. Why should not the many Gospels mentioned by Luke be the "revealed" ones, and Luke's the forgery?

In one of the many Gospels we were told that Jesus made mud birds fly, and stretched a small door so as to fit a large opening. Why are these divine incidents labelled lies (or "legends") while we are asked to believe that Jesus walked on water, was carried about by a devil, and made a few loaves and fishes feed a multitude? It is only fair to add, however, that Dr. Short does not summarily dismiss the "many" Gospels. Their writers were "quite sincere Christians," he tells us, "and artists in their own way; some of their descriptions are really very striking." Obviously if the Roman Church had not stepped in and insisted that there could only be four Gospels because there were only four corners to the earth, he would have hotly defended the mud birds and the stretched doors.

Dr. Short loves the miracles—whether in the four or the many Gospels—and it is a pity that he never heard "a voice from heaven saying, 'This is My Beloved Son'" —a voice from heaven being as natural as a nightingale singing. Nothing, in fact, can be too stupid so long as it comes from the New Testament.

But I must leave what he has to say of the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection for another article.

H. CUTNER.

LEGALISED PROSTITUTION

IN that most Catholic country, Portugal, legalised prostitution is still one of the chief sources of the State's revenue. There is an organisation for the procuring of women for South American brothels from which the Government gets its share. This organisation is aided and abetted by the State. Parliament make an occasional protest like the following, more for propaganda purposes than from any real desire to see this vile traffic stopped. A Representative moved the following:—

"The Portuguese Abolitionist Society are here to support and second with interest the representation which was put forward a few days ago, in which the closing of the Houses of Prostitution and the prohibiting of the registering of minors by the police was proposed. The shameful evil of Prostitution is considered a profession by the law of our land.

The civilisation in which we live is proud of having abolished slavery, but, nevertheless, we maintain this other kind of slavery which is the commercial exploitation of the Prostitute and the international traffic in human beings, many of whom are defenceless, is the vilest. Here in Portugal an old law formed a half-century ago, gives to this important problem a solution entirely political, so that the opening and maintaining of brothels, turned into fountains of despicable profit, and paying their contributions to the State the same as any other business, is freely tolerated.

Senor President, it is impossible that this state of things should continue, and I shiver with disgust

when I think that in the coffers of the State are mixed the coins received from the fruits of honest work and those received from the traffic in human flesh. From the statistics, I see that the numbers of these poor victims are steadily rising."

There followed, as always a eulogy of Salazar and talk of the Christian spirit in which the country is ruled and the Grace of God was called for him and his Government. There was no discussion of the matter.

Such is the anomaly of the existing regulations that, though it is prohibited for a minor to contract marriage without the consent of the parents, if the same minor wants to enter a house of Prostitution there is nothing to prevent her doing so. Statistics published in 1941 show an increasing number of minors of the ages of 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and it can be verified that the majority who have signed the police registers are under 21 years of age.

—From our Portuguese Correspondent—N.F.

THE MYSTERY OF THE PRESBYTER JOHN

II

IN "The Quest" (vol. XXI, pp. 113-128), Dr. Eisler gives a masterly exposition of the doctrines of Simon Magnus respecting the Paraclete, who is mentioned in the Fourth Gospel (XIV, 15-18), and whom Simon himself claimed to be. Acts (VIII, 9-24) relates a stormy interview in Samaria between Simon Peter and Simon Magnus, which, however, did not concern the above matter. In his "Enigma of the Fourth Gospel," Dr. Eisler represents the heretic Marcion as having become secretary to the presbyter John, to whom he introduced certain books, among them being works written respectively by Simon Magnus and Lazarus. But John, detecting heretical tendencies in parts of these lucubrations, dismissed Marcion from his service, which, however, did not prevent some of the errors in question from getting into his own book. The above facts explain how it comes to pass that the other three Gospels never mention either Lazarus or the Paraclete. But, besides his desire to introduce new facts and doctrines regarding Christ's life and teaching, John wished to attest these additions by the production of an eye and ear witness, therein excelling his predecessors who had failed to produce this kind of evidence. Hence he presents "the disciple whom Jesus loved." This man, according to Dr. Eisler, was Lazarus. The identification is no less ingenious than probable. The conclusion of the Gospel implies that the guarantor of the author had written a book, for the evangelist himself says of him, "This is the disciple which beareth witness of these things, and wrote these things, and we know that his witness is true." On this passage, Dr. Eisler finely says:—

Lazarus is dead, but John is very much alive. It is he who adds his testimony of the dead man whose witness "he knows to be true." How could we all be so blind, as not to see that the "we" is nothing but the *pluralis auctoris*, the *pluralis modestatis*, the "we" which we too have used all the time in this book, the age-old rhetorical device for "roping in" the reader into a team of the writer's willing adherents, the threadbare *captatio benevolentiae*, to win the hearer's assent by making him believe that he too, has of course discovered all these things simultaneously with the writer or orator, that

he too, would say or write the same things, if he happened to be in the author's or speaker's chair (p. 193).

Every word of this is true, but what are we to think of Lazarus, if he really wrote such a book as poor old John evidently believed?

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

GARDEN SOLILOQUY

Gardens! You don't know the half
Of what I got!
Old Gawd the Fraud
Looks down on
You and I—
Old Boojum in the sky—
And all his bugs contend
They'll get us
In the end!
"More Bughouses!" cries the minister—
Hells bells!
That smells
Of truth almost too sinister!
We really need insecticides
And smaller gardens
For each and every slimy worm
On tender plants to squirm—
"A garden" I've often thought
Is well named a *plot*.
It may have been a fool who said
Ain't no Boojum
In the sky above, nor here below—
Yet some do say
That wisdom comes from
The mouth of any fool—
I know that by my garden pool
Walk snails
By pails!
Between Tom Brown's and My garden
I hawf
To lawf!
Victorian Reverie, one hundred years ago—
How times do change!
God may have walked
In Brown's ferned grot—
But Stranger, all that strolls in mine
Are bugs and slugs
At any time.
The Question is; did Brown, of Garden fame,
Have just
A nip
Of old Vat 69
At break of dawn and
Saw God walking on his lawn?
Else where from came the vision
Which Reverends liken to a
Sanctimonious glow?
I'd like to know.

DELBERT PHILBERT.

THE AUTHOR OF "TRILBY"

A grand-daughter of George du Maurier has just been converted to Romanism—but it is not generally known that the famous author of "Trilby" and "Peter Ibbetson," and one of the three or four great "Punch" artists, was certainly a confirmed sceptic. One chapter in "Trilby" gave great offence to believers, it was so outspoken. Its hero Little Billee, told his parson tutor that he was reading the "Origin of Species" and that he had given up going to church altogether. The parson was so furious that he could only yell, "You're a thief, sir, a thief. You're trying to rob me of my Saviour!" There is much more related, and du Maurier must have been very much disliked in clerical circles as a result.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

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

LONDON—INDOOR

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Tuesday, December 14, 7 p.m.: "Civil Liberties". Mr. NEIL LAWSON.

Rationalist Press Association (Alliance Hall, Palmer Street, S.W. 1).—Monday, December 13, 7-30 p.m.: "Current Theories of Personality". Fifth Lecture "Analytical Psychology" (C. Jung); "Individual Psychology" (A. Adler). Dr. FRIEDA GOLDMAN.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: "The Judicial Process". Prof. G. W. KEETON, M.A. LL.D.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: "God or Man". Mr. R. H. ROSETTI (General Secretary N.S.S.).

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Glasgow (Brunswick Street).—Sunday, 3 p.m.: Messrs. S. BRYDEN, E. LAWASI and J. HUMPHREY.

Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barker's Pool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. A. SAMMS and others.

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Blackpool Debating Society (46, Adelaide Street).—Tuesday, December 14, 7 p.m.: "The Jews in the World To-day." Rev. S. BLACK, M.A.

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "Crime and Society." Mr. J. BACKHOUSE (Bradford City Council).

Glasgow Secular Society (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "The Scot and the Kirk." Mr. OLIVER BROWN (Scot, National Party).

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "Royal Romances." Mr. BERNARD M'QUILLIN.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Chorlton Town Hall, All Saints).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "Will Christ Save Us?" Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Coopers Hall, 12, Shaw Street, Liverpool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "Oscar Wilde." Mr. HERBERT.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Parliament Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "The Suicide of Christian Civilisation." Mr. ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON, M.A.

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: "Christianity—Dope or Dynamite?" Rev. J. ALEX. HEYES.

SECOND-HAND BOOKS, Wants List Welcomed. Michael Boyle, 21 Rosslyn Hill, N.W. 3.

The Bible is responsible for the cruel slaughter of millions of alleged witches. It is also responsible for the prolonged treatment of lunatics, as possessed. The methods of science are now adopted in civilised countries and hysterical women are no longer tortured as witches.—G. W. FOOTE.

AMERICAN PAMPHLETS

THE SECRET OF CATHOLIC POWER.

By L. H. Lehman. Is it Religious or Political. 22 pages. Price 1s., post free.

MIXED MARRIAGES

By L. H. Lehman. An authoritative exposition of the Roman Catholic attitude towards marriage between Catholics and non-Catholics. 24 pages. 1s. 6d., post free.

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

By L. H. Lehman. The Catholic attempt to control education in the U.S.A. with some facts and figures of Catholic criminals and juvenile delinquency. 24 pages. Price 1s. 6d., post free.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN A DEMOCRACY

By L. H. Lehman and F. V. Riggs. An account of how the Catholic Church obtains money, property, and power. It includes a chart showing the proportion of religious denominations in the U.S.A. Congress. 32 pages. Price 1s. 6d., post free.

VATICAN POLICY IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

By L. H. Lehman. 50 pages of documented facts regarding Catholicism and Fascism. Price 1s. 4d., post free.

THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SECOND WORLD WAR

By D. Tomitch, translated by L. H. Lehman. A record of Catholicism and anti-Semitism originally published as an official communication to Freemasons of Europe and U.S.A. Authenticated evidence regarding the Vatican intrigues with the Axis Dictators. 36 pages. Price 1s. 6d., post free.

CENTURIES OF INTOLERANCE

By J. M. Freeman, B.A. A survey of Catholicism and anti-Semitism, with parallels of Papal and Nazi anti-Jewish decrees. 48 pages. Price 1s. 6d., post free.

SOCIALISM AND RELIGION

By F. A. Ridley. A useful survey of Religion in relation to Socialism. A short history of Religion from the witch doctor to High Mass at St. Peter's. 20 pages. Price 1s. 1d. post free.

The Ideal Present

Take out a subscription for your friends. "The Freethinker" will be sent direct to any address for 6 months, 8s. 6d., or 12 months, 17s.

JUST ISSUED

HANDBOOK of the NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

Vital Information
for all Members
and Freethinkers

32 pages.

7d. post free.

ESSAYS IN FREETHINKING

By CHAPMAN COHEN

Series Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4

Each volume about 160 pages

Essays include:—

Religion and To-day.

Religion and the State.

'Do Miracles Happen?'

Religion and the Young.

Praying for Rain.

Is Religion of Use?

Price 2s. 6d., postage 2½d.

The four vols. 10s. 6d., post free

THE AGE OF REASON

By THOMAS PAINE

The book that has survived over a century of abuse and misrepresentation.

Includes a critical introduction and life by Chapman Cohen and a reproduction of a commemoration plaque subscribed by American soldiers in this country. 230 pages. Price, cloth, 3s. Paper, 2s. Postage 3d.

THE BIBLE HANDBOOK

By G. W. FOOTE and W. P. BALL

Specially compiled for easy reference. For Freethinkers and Inquiring Christians

References given for Bible Contradictions, Absurdities, Atrocities, Prophecies and Immoralities

9th edition. 2nd printing. 176 pages.

Price 3s., Cloth only. Postage 2½d.

LIFT UP YOUR HEADS

An Anthology for Freethinkers

by

WILLIAM KENT, F.S.A.

400 Quotations Fully Indexed
from 167 Authors ★ and Classified

Cloth 5s. Postage 3d. Paper 3s. 6d.

From all Booksellers

★ PIONEER PRESS ★

THE N.S.S.

SPECIAL CHRISTMAS CARD



At the request of numerous readers we are re-issuing this novel and interesting seasonal greeting card.

◆◆◆

Price (with envelope) - 7d. each

PIONEER PRESS