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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Freethought in the Present Age

IN 1859, Charles Darwin first furnished solid proofs for the then speculative theory of evolution. Since that date, the whole framework of human thought has been transformed by the evolutionary concept. Amongst the earliest disciples and most enthusiastic defenders of the evolutionary theory were the Freethinkers of the generation of Bradlaugh, Huxley, and Haeckel, but since their now far-off day, Freethought itself, like all living phenomena, has fallen under the effective operation of the evolutionary "law." We propose to direct a glance at some outstanding results of the operation of this "law" in relation to the Freethought Movement and its opponents, and although our comments refer primarily to England, they can substantially be held to apply to the whole international movement of Freethought in the Western world.

In the nineteenth century, the dominant social philosophy was that of Liberalism in politics, Individualism in ethics, and Free Trade in economics. In matters appertaining to science, philosophy, and the general development of human intellect, it could usually be assumed that the State would remain neutral, and, in fact, it generally did. For this was the age of *laissez-faire*, *laissez-aller*, and the State in Western Europe and America tended toward what Alexander von Humboldt once termed the "lazy state." Throughout the classic century of Liberalism it was altogether exceptional for the State to assume the role of arbiter and policeman in what we may broadly denominate as cultural questions, and where such interference took place, as in the case of the Bradlaugh controversy over the Parliamentary Oath, or the practical application of the Blasphemy Laws, it was the State, and not the contemporary progressive forces, that eventually gave way.

Church no less than State, succumbed to the all-pervading Liberal atmosphere. It carried on its battle against its enemies; the Deism of "Tom" Paine and the later secularist philosophy of the age of Renan, German "Higher Criticism" and the English champions of Evolution, by, in general, spiritual (one can hardly refer to them as intellectual) weapons, varied by wholesale abuse, social ostracism, and even occasional pin-pricks of persecution. But by nothing that can be compared with the wholesale ruthless persecution of either the Catholic Middle Ages, or the subsequent Fascist era. The pre-eminent nineteenth century doctrine of *laissez-faire*, the economic aspect of which Free Trade, was too powerful to be resisted. Did an economic conference re-echo with applause to the dictum of a Liberal economist: "My friends, were Jesus Christ the Master, with us to-day, he would be a Free Trader." Thus enrolling the Carpenter of Nazareth in the ranks of the "Anti-Corn Law League." Such was the scene in Church and State when the

Freethought Movement in its logical atheistic form was first launched about a century ago. But such is emphatically *not* the scene in the "year of grace," 1949.

For the philosophy which dominated the nineteenth century has now "passed over into its opposite" as the dialectical materialists would phrase it. If the previous century was the century of *laissez-faire*: the present one is that of the State, and this is so everywhere to-day quite irrespective of what may be the particular philosophy to which the State is nominally attached. The militant secular creeds of the present age which attach to themselves the fanaticism usually only found in religion in former ages, Fascism and Communism, are avowedly totalitarian; neither recognises the least right of opposition to the omnipotent (one) Party State. (One must add in fairness that Communism professes only a provisional attachment to the "dictatorship of the proletariat," but so far this limitation has remained in the realm of theory, in practice a contrary process has been observed: the State of Lenin, supposedly in process of "withering away" has given way to the State of Stalin, in which everything "withers away" except the State.)

Even the more moderate social philosophies of our era, such as Social-Democracy and Monopoly Capital which repudiate the "total state" in words, nevertheless stand for an immense extension of state-control in deed. Only in the still adolescent civilisation of the U.S.A. do people still parade their attachment to "Liberty." To be sure, the swan is said to sing loudest just before it dies! The State of the New Deal is, in any case, no longer the "lazy state" of the nineteenth century. Thus we observe the present century is pre-eminently an era of state-monopoly, of totalitarianism, either open or incipient.

This change in the secular scene is accompanied by an equally drastic change in the religious world. Gone are the days of "the two and seventy jarring sects" who fiercely disputed over the infallible Bible in the heyday of Protestant sectarianism. Now, more and more, we witness a return to the older Christianity of the Middle Ages (and of the Inquisition) before the great split in the Christian camp at the Reformation. More and more to-day the Church of Rome tends to dwarf the rival churches and to dominate the contemporary religious scene. The far-sighted prediction of Charles Bradlaugh, already in the heart of the liberal nineteenth century, that the final conflict would be between Rome and Atheism, is becoming even more probable. The Catholic Church has now definitely superseded the "Bible-banging" of Protestantism of the last century as the chief and most dangerous opponent of Militant Freethought.

Why this is so, and the significance that can be attached to the substitution of Catholicism for the Protestant sect as the chief rival of atheism is obvious, the Roman Catholic Church is the totalitarian form of Christianity, its adoption by a totalitarian age is

entirely in harmony with the current evolution of society. For ecclesiastical Rome herself arose under the totalitarian shadow of the secular empire of ancient Rome. And all the Fascist doctrines, "order, hierarchy, absorption of the individual by the State" were known long ago in the Vatican, and efficiently practised before Hitler, Mussolini and the Gestapo were ever heard of.

Furthermore, from the standpoint of Militant Freethought, its twentieth century war against Rome differs in kind from its earlier war against Protestant sectarianism. For Freethought, even Atheism, can co-exist with Protestant bibliolatry, it cannot co-exist with Rome. From Protestantism Freethought received abuse, ostracism and occasional persecution. From Rome it can expect nothing except totalitarian persecution and ultimate obliteration. For the Roman Catholic Church agrees with Bradlaugh's prediction, and she traditionally does not do things by halves. To be sure, the effective motto of all totalitarian regimes, both secular and spiritual where enemies are concerned, is "stone dead has no fellow."

The prime enemy of Freethought is no longer the Bible, nor even any particular religion, even Catholicism: it is, rather, the totalitarian principle itself under whose sway Freethought cannot hope even to survive, let alone prosper. Hence a critical survey of contemporary sociology represents to-day the primary function of any Freethought Movement, which really accepts the evolutionary principle and is serious about its wish to survive in the so changed circumstances of the mid-twentieth century.

F. A. RIDLEY.

A NOVEL THEORY OF MAN'S DEVELOPMENT II

IN his discussion of the contrasted fates of man, monkeys and apes, Prof. Keith inquires as to the reasons why our simian cousins have been restricted to their native forests, while man has spread to all parts of the habitable globe. "How, then," he asks, "has it come about that the human population of the world now numbers about 2,000 millions, while the anthropoids, if assembled together from the jungles of the East and of the West number under, rather than over one million?" Greater knowledge of the development of the human brain might supply an explanation. As an eminent morphologist, Keith notes the importance of the attainment of the erect posture as a major factor in man's predominance, while the acquisition of the ability to progress on the sole of his foot proved advantageous.

Moreover, as Spencer long since pointed out, the gaining of the upright posture, with greater visual powers; the free use of his hands for exploratory purposes; the subsequent employment of stone implements, with increasing facilities for communication with his fellows, by means of signs, gestures and rudimentary speech; early man's range of experience became immensely extended, with a markedly increased cranial capacity widening the distance which distinguished him from his simian ancestors and collaterals.

Recent discoveries throw considerable light on the conversion of ape-men into human kind. Darwin considered Africa as man's probable birthplace, and in 1946, a monograph appeared from the pens of Prof. Broom, F.R.S., and Dr. Schepers entitled *The South African Ape-Men*. Previously, in 1924, Prof. Raynold Dart announced the discovery at Taung, in Bechuanaland, of a hitherto unknown fossil skull of an anthropoid

much closer akin to mankind than any extant or extinct form known. Many anthropologists rejected this claim. But Dr. Broom supported Dart and decided to continue his researches. As Keith observes, Broom, in 1936, was "rewarded by the discovery of the fossil skull of an anthropoid which he at first believed to be the adult form of that found at Taung, but later came to the conclusion that it differed so much from that described by Dr. Dart that it deserved a separate generic name—Plesianthropus. Then, in 1938, fortune again smiled upon him; the fossil bones of a third kind of anthropoid were discovered. The calcareous deposits which yielded these new forms to Dr. Broom were of the same nature as those of Taung. . . . Meantime, on the strength of the evidence that had been accumulating, Dr. Broom believed that the antiquity of the South African anthropoids was greater than had been originally estimated."

These ancient anthropoids clearly differ from living apes in their teeth which are distinctly human in character. Also, their lower limbs are quite human in form and had they been found alone would have been regarded as those of early man by anatomists. These extinct anthropoids evidently progressed just as we do. Indeed, declares Keith, "the fossil fragments from their upper limbs were also shaped as in man's, the arms and hands no longer served in locomotion as in all living anthropoids, but were free to serve the needs of the body. The anatomical evidence suggests that the South African anthropoids were also human in this respect—their chief means of offence and defence were provided not by great canines as in living anthropoids, but by means of improvised weapons wielded by the hand."

These animals, if not human, were obviously sub-human, and betray no near relationship with any living anthropoid. Dr. Schepers is convinced that the least we can claim "is that these fossil types were capable of functioning in the erect posture, of using their hands in a limited sense for skilled movements not associated with progression, of interpreting their immediately visible, palpable and audible environment in such detail and with such discrimination that they had the subject matter for articulate speech well under control, and of having developed motoric centres for the appropriate application; they were also capable of communicating the acquired information to their families, friends and neighbours, thus establishing one of the first bonds of man's complex civilisation." Schepers skillfully deciphered the mental capacity of these fossil forms from casts taken from the interior of their crania. Though these ancient anthropoids outwardly resembled man-like apes, they were truly human in character.

Keith, like Darwin, postulates Africa as the scene of man's first appearance. He thinks that, as in that Continent, "we find the living anthropoids which are most akin to man in body and in brain; it is there, too, that ground forms of anthropoids lived; the oldest and most primitive orthograde forms lived in the lower valley of the Nile. If we may select one region as more likely than another, then our choice falls on the Uplands of Uganda and Kenya: during Upper Miocene times this area was the home of numerous anthropoids, one of which was akin to the gorilla and chimpanzee, and yet in certain features more human than either." Dr. Davidson Black and other authorities, however, consider Asia as our ancestral home as, in the distant past, Northern India was populated by a rich array of simian species whose remains have been discovered in that country's strata. Despite this, Keith adheres to Africa

Man's place of origin and urges that about ten or twelve million years ago anthropoid groups had spread to the tropical regions of the Old World from an African starting place.

Man does not seem to have reached America until the closing stages of the Glacial Epoch about 10,000 years since, when presumably rude tribes crossed the Bering Strait which barely divides Asia from America. The harsh climate of this area long deterred migrants and it is noteworthy that Japan only "2,000 miles from the Strait, was not inhabited until the Neolithic Age; no trace has been found in it of Palaeolithic peoples."

No fossil remains of man can be safely assigned to the Pliocene Period which, in Prof. Zenner's scale, embraces seven million years. But from the beginning of the succeeding Pleistocene Epoch, its deposits yield conclusive proof of man's presence in the artifacts he has left behind him. From the opening of this era—a million years ago—man's stone implements have been traced in Pleistocene strata in Asia, Africa and Europe. Moreover, it appears evident that long before the dawn of Pleistocene times men lived in England. That eminent East Anglian Archaeologist, Reid Moir, convinced most experts that the "eoliths"—flint implements of various types—which he unearthed in Pliocene deposits were shaped by human hands. The Abbé Breuil, another high authority, found stone tools in the earliest Pleistocene strata in Morocco.

Keith contends that nationalism has played a predominant part in human development and he doubts its replacement by universal sovereignty. He opines that contemporary nationalities will at last revert to the individual groupings such as those of primitive communities. "Nations," he avers, "are giving lip-service to U.N.O., but everywhere we find them searching for economic independence and self-sufficiency, and strengthening the social bonds and services which give unity and solidarity to nations. Everywhere nations become more nationalised in thought and deed."

In conclusion, our scientist stresses the verity that evolution is not merely ancient history, but a process in ceaseless operation, here and now.

T. F. PALMER.

PROBLEMS OF SEX

In his *Everyday Sex Problems* (Frederick Muller Ltd., 10s. 6d.) Dr. Norman Haire deals with some of the many difficulties people have to face in their sex life. However much the Church has done to suppress the fact that there are difficulties, or that, in admitting them, they can be easily solved by a celibate priest, the truth is that in the main the problems raised by sex questions and experiences cause a great deal of unhappiness and are not easily solved. All sorts of inhibitions enter into the domain of sex—modesty, for example, shame, disgust, and distrust, and even an experienced sexologist is not always successful in providing a remedy.

How far sex education, or the lack of it, is responsible, is a problem still hotly argued. We have gone a long way from *The Elements of Social Science*, that mid-Victorian book written by a young enthusiastic doctor which was so frank and outspoken that it even frightened many Freethinkers of the period, and provided magnificent ammunition for the most bigoted of the children of Christ. I have often wondered in what way Christians would have carried on their campaign against Bradlaugh without this book, for it gave them such a wonderful chance of showing Freethinkers "wallowing" in the

depths of "impurity" and contrasting such obscene orgies with their own immaculately chaste conduct. Unfortunately, Christians had to face at the same time various "Abodes of Love" packed with one male Messiah as a rule, and quite a number of "Brides of Christ" for him, and no disclaimers quite helped their own Christian chastity.

Although the *Elements* survived without being hauled up before some Christian magistrate horror-stricken at having to deal with such "filth," the work of Havelock Ellis helped to inculcate more than a little sanity into the authorities, and books dealing with various aspects of sex began slowly to appear. Among the most prominent of their writers is Dr. Haire, who fortunately combines lucidity of expression with a frank, commonsense approach. His own medical practice has provided him with wide experience, and such experience is worth far more than the theoretical ravings of a celibate man of God who is obliged to settle everything with an appeal to "our Lord." If "our Lord" ever lived at all, it must be obvious that his experience of life somewhere in Palestine nearly 2,000 years ago, with its ideal of literal chastity—even to the extent of mutilation—gave him no authority of any kind to settle our own difficult sexual problems.

Here then in this book is the way Dr. Haire answered many questions addressed to him by the readers of the Australian magazine *Woman*. Here you have what a modern doctor thinks on Family Planning, Sterility, Abortion, Sexual Abstinence, Promiscuity, Frigidity, Nudism, and many other problems which perplexed ordinary readers. They are very clearly and frankly discussed, and I was glad to see that Dr. Haire did not fall back on psycho-analysis as the one incontrovertible cure for everything. For him, a fully qualified and experienced doctor is a necessity when it comes to those things where a medical training alone can give the necessary knowledge for a cure.

Of course, one need not agree with everything proposed by Dr. Haire, and I for one by no means agree that "punishment of the sex delinquent does little good." This is his own opinion as the result of long experience; but I am inclined to feel that every sex delinquent would thoroughly agree with him—especially after being caught at some particularly brutal assault. I no more believe in "reform" in his case than I believe in reform for a murderer like Heath or Haigh.

All readers who are interested in this and other sex problems should make a point of reading this very stimulating, provocative, and outspoken book. It will add much to their knowledge.

H. CUTNER.

A VOCATION

The *Church Times* complains that the young men are not trained to understand what is meant by a "sense of responsibility" in connection with their work and it does not believe that "the grandiose schemes for post-ordination training . . . will serve to make good this deficiency." Moreover, there is always the question of training curates to follow in the good work, and this appears to be hopelessly inadequate in the colleges. To put the matter in another way and very bluntly, the Church cannot attract sufficient young men with the necessary intelligence and sense of responsibility to become priests, and even when it does in a few cases, it cannot properly train them for God's work as envisaged by the *Church Times*. And we couldn't care less.

ACID DROPS

The heading of these columns was first used by G. W. Foote, founder and first editor of *The Freethinker*, and it was his idea that a light, racy facetious tone applied to some of the utterances and foibles of our "Christian brethren" would not only lighten the generally serious theoretical Freethought articles, but would enable us to utilise that weapon dreaded by all religionists, ridicule and sarcasm and the *reductio ad absurdum*. It is true that these arguments can be a double-edged weapon, but we are certain that we shall deliver more cuts than we receive. "Acid Drops" will continue to keep an eye on professional Christians, and will try to catch them tripping in the advocacy of Christianity in all parts of the world. We rely on our readers to watch parsonic antics in all quarters and to this extent this is your column built on your zeal in collecting cuttings from local newspapers and Parish magazines and Council reports.

All this leads to the following and points to the dilemma in which we are put to comment on a cutting that really deserves the prize for the most typical inanity we have ever come across. A spiritualist weekly reporting a seance, during which "Patsy," from the "other side," in response to a request, brought a banana, presumably from the other side, and asked, "where shall I put it?" was told to put it on the medium's head. "In a few seconds the banana was placed on his head." What a sense of fun!

At first glance it would appear from the report of the Rev. F. Tyler, Secretary to the Mission to London, that the whole population of London was converted during that emotional splurge, but when he went into details in his address to the clergy at Chichester it was admitted that it was only "the faithful that were affected" beyond this "a dent was made in the armour of the average Londoner." By what we have seen of the "average" Londoner, he has soon straightened out this dent, and the clergy are still complaining that people do not come to church. If one must tell a whopper, it is always policy to make it a good one.

The Vicar of Holy Trinity, Beckenham, seems to have succumbed to the prevailing orgy of form filling. He refuses to baptise any children unless their parents sign a declaration that they will help to further the child's religion, see that they are confirmed and promise that the child will pray regularly. How signing a form will ensure this we do not know, but we are sure that if this sort of thing is made any more difficult, people may begin to realise that baptism is unnecessary, and the idea that to "fix a name" one must be christened, may be exploded.

We hold no brief for prostitution, but the horror it arouses in very religious people is quite amusing. For example, the *Church Times*, attacking the "vice" round about Paddington, lays special stress on the profits the women make. One of them confessed to having £4,000 in the bank and her weekly income was never less than £30 a week. We wonder whether these "unholy" gains have more to do with religious horror at prostitution than the act itself? We wonder also if the religious people who so anxiously fight for "purity" are not secretly pleased when the poor girls catch some illness—a sort of direct punishment from God Almighty for being naughty?

In trying to prove that Jesus really existed, Jews, Unitarian Christians, and reverent Rationalists, almost always appeal to James, "the brother of the Lord"—as if there was any more proof of this James than of Jesus. It is, however, interesting to point out again that the Roman Church denies that "brother" here means brother; and the "Universe," in answer to an inquiry, insists that "this James was in all probability a cousin of Our Lord." All we want to know now is, who was the mother of James?

Why does the Roman Church object to Freemasonry? Here is the answer, crisp and plain, from one of its journals—"Because of its utter secrecy and because it seems to be a rival religion to Catholicism." How dare anything rival Roman Catholicism!

Our sympathy goes to the relatives of a Mrs. Power who died of a heart attack at Lourdes where she has been buried. There is, of course, nothing extraordinary in this—though the chance of a miraculous cure seems to have been missed—and somehow or other we do not seem to hear that pilgrims to Fatima die there. It will be bad business for Lourdes if more of these deaths are recorded, especially more deaths than cures; but it may mean a very good thing for Fatima. Has the Virgin changed sides?

During the war, a Baroness de Hueck was asked by American Catholics to find out what American young men and women thought of God, the Church, and religion; so she worked as a waitress, as a factory hand, and in pleasure places, and listened to what they said about these things, eventually writing *Dear Bishop* which has just been published. It is significant to note that very many of these young people ("often the worst," she adds) had been good Catholics *once*—an unconscious testimony to the way in which religion helps people to remain good; and these "worst" often return to the Faith they never relinquished. What earthly use is such a religion?

The clergy blow hot or cold to requirement, and we have lately quoted many instances of parsons jubilantly claiming a house full, and just as often bemoaning the fact that the attendances are dwindling. Mr. Leslie Ayres is a little more cautious, he just blows luke-warm and says that the statement that the churches are empty is too sweeping. He knows that religious services are held in the home of the Vicar of St. Paul's, Greenwich, with Mothers' meetings and Toc H meetings in his basement and kitchen; he even knows of a church where extra seats are put in the aisle. We still remain unconvinced and will still do so until we see a queue lining up for a religious service in the same way as for Betty Grable.

The maudlin, mawkish slobbering exaltation of love that is effected from the pulpit is enough to make rational men and women sick, and the outpourings of Buchmanites, that group of adolescent exhibitionists, make one ashamed of one's fellow humans. Christian love is the cheapest and the emptiest in the world. Slave owners were Christian, factory owners of the last century were Christian, Hitler was a Christian. Instead of bleating about the love that passeth all understanding, a little toleration for unpopular opinions, a little ordinary justice would be more in order, but that would be asking too much.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

J. T. SYKES (U.S.A.)—Thanks for extremely useful cuttings, we hope our comments on American Catholicism meet with your approval.

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.

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. The following periodicals are being received regularly, and can be consulted at "The Freethinker" office: THE TRUTH SEEKER (U.S.A.), THE FREETHINKER (U.S.A.), THE LIBERAL (U.S.A.), THE VOICE OF FREEDOM (U.S.A.), German and English), PROGRESSIVE WORLD (U.S.A.), THE NEW ZEALAND RATIONALIST, THE RATIONALIST (Australia), DER FREIDENKER (Switzerland), LA RAISON (France), DON BASILIO (Italy).

SUGAR PLUMS

Additional supplies of the commemoration stamps issued by the Italian National Freethought Society, Giordano Bruno, in connection with the International Freethought Congress at Rome in September, and the fourth centenary of the birth of Giordano Bruno, are now to hand and may be had from the General Secretary, N.S.S., 41, Gray's Inn Road London, W.C.1., at 1s. 6d. for 25, plus postage 1d.

The Executive of the National Secular Society takes this opportunity of thanking all those speakers and other workers engaged in the open-air work of the Movement. The work is hard and not too popular, but it brings out that interest and enthusiasm for intellectual and social progress which is one of the high marks of a good citizen and makes the task pleasant to the right type of man and woman.

We are very pleased to note that Mr. Peter Cotes, who is one of the most original and enterprising of our theatrical producers, and whose reputation for thought-provoking plays is well known, is staging a short season for his company at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith. We hope all readers interested in the theatre will make a note of his first production there—Strindberg's "Miss Julie." The *Manchester Guardian*, commenting on it when seen earlier out of London, called it, "A masterful production . . . It surges on with passionate intensity. There is an unflinching tenseness about Joan Miller's 'Miss Julie.' The play is preceded by Bernard Shaw's 'Village Wooing.'" Strindberg and Shaw produced by Mr. Cotes should prove a rare theatrical feast.

With Sir Richard Acland, M.P., Mr. Tom Driberg, M.P., and some laymen and clergy, a Socialist Christian Group has been founded to make the Christian Church the foundation of "the British Labour Movement." We have an idea that if the principles of the National Secular Society were accepted by a majority of M.P.s, the Christian Church would also strongly do its utmost to be affiliated with us. Why not? It is still "a nose of wax."

We regret to learn that Mr. T. M. Mosley, the Secretary of the Nottingham Branch of the N.S.S., and one of our popular lecturers, has to have an operation and is at the moment in the City Hospital. We wish him a speedy recovery.

THE WORLD UNION OF FREETHINKERS

THE Twenty-ninth International Congress will be held at Rome by invitation of the Italian National Society, "Giordano Bruno," September 9 to September 12, 1949.

The Congress will celebrate the quarter-centenary of the birth of Giordano Bruno (at Nola in 1548) and the centenary of Garibaldi's Defence of Rome; and will discuss: (1) The Problem of Schools; (2) The Religions, the Churches and International Relations; (3) Humanism and Freethought.

The President of Honour of the Congress will be Monsieur Edouard Herriot, who will be supported by a Committee of Honour from many countries, including Australia, Belgium, Canada, China, France, Great Britain, Italy, Luxembourg, Mexico, New Zealand and the U.S.A.

Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner is the President. Vice-presidents are Dr. L. Milde, A. L. Constandse, and A. Lorulot. The Hon. Secretary is Mlle. P. H. Pardon, the Hon. Treasurers are L. Courtois and J. de Ronde. Mr. R. H. Rosetti is representing the N.S.S., while Mr. Charles Smith, the Editor of the New York *Truth Seeker*, will represent the Freethinkers of America.

Among the names on the Committee of Honour we note Sir Arthur Keith, Prof. Laski, Ernest Newman, Eden Philpotts, Majorie Bowen and Prof. Heath from Great Britain, and many distinguished ones from the other countries.

A party will be leaving London under the leadership of Mr. R. H. Rosetti by 10 a.m. train on Wednesday, September 7, arriving in Rome the next day.

Those who attend the Congress must bear in mind that it will be no platform for political doctrine; the Union is neutral with regard to politics save that it supports all movements to emancipate the mind and to resist any attempt to hinder the free operation of opinion.

Here are the Congress resolutions proposed by the British delegation:—

1.—The W.U.F. assembled in Congress at Rome on September 9—12, 1949, resolves that it must be the aim of freethinkers in all countries to work and press for the emancipation of the schools from all theological or political doctrine and convention, and deplores, unscrupulous or misguided efforts to bias unformed and unformed minds.

2.—That the declared aims of the W.U.F. have ever been constructively humanist, v. Declarations of Rome 1904, re-affirmed at Luxemburg 1929, at London 1945, and that this Congress re-affirms these declarations.

3.—This Congress, believing that peace, freedom, and the co-operation of mankind are promoted by the separation of Church and State, and by a scrupulous respect for the individual conscience, denounces as reactionary the policy of those churches which seek to control political action and the policy of those powers which seek to gain the alliance of churches; and declares itself uncompromisingly opposed both to religion as an instrument of politics, and to politics as a mask of religion.

4.—That this Congress, declaring its fundamental belief in Freedom of Thought, deplores the State suppression of and interference with any section of the press under any pretext in any country.

It equally deplores the misuse of public means of expression for the dissemination of false or misleading information.

Fuller particulars, with details of fares, accommodation, etc., can be had from the General Secretary, National Secular Society, 41, Grays Inn Road, London, W.C.1. There should be a good muster of British Freethinkers.

AFFIRMATION *v.* THE BIBLE OATH

IT was a pity that Mr. E. V. Crumpton did not insist on the usual public ceremony when being "sworn in." The fact is that affirmation needs publicity of the right sort. Perhaps Mr. Crumpton will see to it that not merely the Bible oath formula but also that for affirmation is exhibited in the witness-box. How can there be a real option for the public when affirmation is studiously kept in the background and, when in the news, dismissed as shocking, unusual, etc.? Exhibit both formulas, or neither; that is the right course.

Much prejudice still exists, especially in official quarters, as to the religious aspect of oaths and affirmations. This needs to be overcome and one way is this. One does *not* go to court usually to discuss religion; one has other pressing business for which all one's faculties need to be reserved; so likewise the court if it is to retain ordinary impartiality. (Charming ideal that: let justice be done, tho' the skies fall!) Very well then; what is to prevent one who would affirm from going into the box and saying to the bench and clerk just this: "I claim the right solemnly to affirm instead of taking an oath, in terms of the Oaths Act, 1888, which states that, '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.'" That is the actual wording of the main clause of the Act, and there seems no reason why it should not be wholly relied upon and recited in open court when one desires to affirm. The Act does *not* insist that a person *must* declare his beliefs or opinions; it is loose enough in phraseology to admit of such open use and should be so used. It is not a "Test" Act; it is permissive in character and should be so interpreted to allow the full benefit of the option it creates.

That it has been used as a test Act should not be a bar to its rightful use; times have changed, and to go forward one must stand on one's rights, legal and general. However pressed by the court to declare one's opinions or beliefs, one way or another, one should refuse to be drawn into such discussion with all the petty prejudice it usually calls forth; equally one should not raise the hand as some courts wrongly require when affirming. Clause 5 of the Act certainly allows that "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." But the uplifted hand is a form of "calling to witness," and only applies to those who swear oaths; Clause 2 of the Act expressly recognises this, for its terms are that, "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."

There, then, is the true option allowed to all by the Act, and open to all to accept and proceed upon; not a scandalous affair but a perfectly legal and open option; part of our heritage of general freedom of thought, etc., the prize of which is constant vigilance and exercise.

This is not to say that the law in these respects is perfect; it is obviously wrong that the penalty clause

of the Oaths Act, 1888, should have been repealed by the Perjury Act, 1911, so that "forswearing one's self" should be the legal offence committed by one who, "shall wilfully, falsely and corruptly affirm any matter or thing which, if deposed on oath, would have amounted to wilful and corrupt perjury." For Clause 15 of the Perjury Act wrongfully says: "(2) In this Act the expression 'oath' in the case of persons for the time being allowed by law to affirm or declare instead of swearing, includes 'affirmation' and 'declaration,' and the expression 'swear' in the like case includes 'affirm' and 'declare.'" That is what one can only call a legal twist; hence he who would be "perfect," having affirmed, should stoutly declare that it must be understood that, so far as he is concerned, notwithstanding the existing legal confusions, it must be understood he had *not* "taken the oath" but, instead, had affirmed.

And finally such a one should round off the formula to which he had given his solemn acceptance, i.e., "to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," by insisting that it must be clearly recognised that in practice this can only mean that his evidence will be truly given "to the best of his honest belief" or "to the best of his knowledge, belief and ability," for that is all an honest witness can do; he cannot "achieve the impossible."

So the writer has successfully pleaded in Court before going on to give his evidence, and so every one should do, to qualify sensibly the existing "impossible and disquieting formula." (Vide Ronald Rubinstein's "John Citizen and the Law." Pelican Books.)

Some day the law, which is not so much a *h'uss* as a mule, will recognise these facts; meanwhile individuals *must* make individual stands.

H. E. EVANS.

MORE VITALISM!

RUBY TA 'BOIS, in her article on "The Theory of Vitalism," seems to have caught the prevailing complaint of either misreading or misunderstanding my statements. She accuses me of insisting that man must have existed prior to life.

What I suggested (not insisted) was that life, or life-force, must have preceded man. Precisely the opposite! It was Mr. Lupton who placed man prior to life when he stated that *life was a function of man*. This, I claimed, was absurd, because nothing can function or activate without the prior existence of an *activator*. I contended that *man was a function of life*, or in other words that man resulted from life-force in action.

I cannot agree that there is no such thing as a vital force or how did matter ever come to be animated? What makes a living thing a dead thing if it is not the withdrawal, absence, or ending of some animating force? the difference between organic and inorganic matter is surely that the former is animated by some *vital force* or energy, while the latter is not.

However, why speculate as to what life is or is not when we have Mr. E. A. McDonald ridiculing the suggestion that there is any meaning or purpose in life? Really, if Atheists have come to this they are indeed in a bad way!

If there is no meaning or purpose in life then there is no meaning or purpose in evolution, or in the existence of anything. Why has man developed from original slime if there is no purpose in so doing? Just because the purpose may not be obvious to Mr. McDonald, or to any of us in our present early stages of intellectual develop-

ment, are we to assume that there is no purpose? Are Atheists so absolutely certain that there is nothing more to be known or learned by man in the hundreds and thousands of years yet to come? Such reasoning is unworthy of anyone who has studied the amazing development of man's intellect from prehistoric times to the present day.

I wonder if our prehistoric McDonalds imagined they knew all there was to know—if so they have been proved sadly wrong in the light of modern knowledge. I certainly have never been so conceited as to suppose that I am the last word in intellectual development, and that man will never advance mentally beyond his present state.

Finally, I must also disagree with the statement that one might as well talk of a "heat-force" as a "life-force." Would there be any heat but for the force or energy involved in combustion and radiation? If there is a force which gives heat, and without which there would be no heat, is it not logical to suppose that there is also a force which gives life, and without which there would be no life?

I am sorry but if certain people wish to disprove Vitalism, they will have to do better than this!

W. H. WOOD.

CORRESPONDENCE

WORLD CITIZENSHIP

Sir.—I note with interest and satisfaction an article on Garry Davis in the 19th June issue of the "Freethinker." Although the tone of the article appears to be favourably disposed to the need for World Government, the approach is made purely through the person of Garry Davis, and it is the popularity which this individual enjoys that makes abundantly clear the realisation on the part of many people that it is by the abolition of nation states that the establishment of lasting world peace may be assured.

World Government, however, is not in itself sufficient, and it is pertinent at this point to draw attention to the need for this to be coupled with the struggle for real freedom within the framework of common ownership of all resources democratically controlled by the rank and file, to ensure that the means are available for the peoples of the world to live in positive harmony rather than mere negative conflict. Without this form of real democratic control of the means of production, tyranny and slavery are the inevitable lot of the average man and woman.

The prerogative of U.N.O. may be the prevention of war—but how much more worth while is the struggle for an everlasting peace?—Yours, etc.,

L. C. JENKINS,
Northern Organiser.
Commonwealth.

JAMES JOYCE

Sir.—I was disappointed only in the length of "Hibernicus's" review of the writings of James Joyce. I can never understand, as a matter of fact, just why Freethinkers pay so little attention to the work of one of our finest literary writers!

His "Portrait" could do much to loose many people from the more subtle grips of Catholicism, as "Hibernicus" implies. But it is Joyce's love of art, his acceptance of life, which I find irresistible.

"Ulysses" is undoubtedly one of the most intriguing and beautiful novels ever written. I think that it is also one of the most exciting books to read. For in its pages we discover a wonderful city—Dublin, watching carefully the every action and thought of its citizens during a single day of twenty-four hours.

Catholicism now and again claims Joyce as its own. But the Irishman who fled away from Catholicism is an out-and-out atheist. He once ridiculed Frank Budgeon's naive belief in the possibility of miracles! (Mr. Budgeon, by the way, has given us the best introduction to Joyce and his work in his

"James Joyce and the making of 'Ulysses'.") No, here is no friend of Catholicism.

"Finnegan's Wake"—thanks mainly to "A Skeleton Key to Finnegan's Wake" by two American writers—is no longer the literary bogey of bogeys that it once was. I have no doubt that one day, in fact, we shall simply regard it as the logical and crowning conclusion of James Joyce's work!—Yours, etc.
RICHARD KEON.

LIFE-FORCE

Sir.—W. H. Wood, like Bernard Shaw, plays with abstract words about Life-Force. There are questions asked that should never be put, e.g. "where does a man's walk go when he sits down?" Life is immortal if applied to mankind through his descendants, but when a family dies previous to the period of procreation and then the parents' death follows with no descendants, so far as applied to them this abstract term, Life-Force, is spent.—Yours, etc.,

PETER T. LOCKIE (U.S.A.).

OBITUARY

HELEN BLACK

It is with deep regret that I report the death on Sunday, 24th July, of Miss Helen Black (of Margaret Morris Movement—teacher of Highland and Country Dancing). Helen belonged to a family of Freethinkers. Her father was a vice-president of the Glasgow Secular Society, and Helen herself a member for 30 years. Throughout her life Helen's views were well known, and during her many travels abroad she carried not only the principles, but also the spirit of Freethought with her.

As a result of a motor accident she lost an arm, and she never completely recovered. During the last month she suffered great pain which she bore with remarkable courage.

To her sorrowing kinsfolk, especially her sister Mrs. Ferguson and her niece Mrs. Grace Smith who nursed her, her pupils, employees and all who knowing her loved her, we deeply sympathise.

A secular funeral and service was given by Mr. Hamilton and Mrs. Whitefield.
M. W.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

OUTDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Car Park, Broadway).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: MESSRS. A. WHARRAD and J. A. BUTTERFIELD.

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: MESSRS. J. SHARPLES and ROTHWELL.

Burnley (Market).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Great Harwood.—Saturday, August 13, 6-15 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Kingston Branch (Castle Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. J. BARKER.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Platt Fields).—Sunday, 3 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON. (Alexandra Park Gates).—Wednesday, 8 p.m.: MESSRS. KAY, SMITH and BILLING.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Ranelagh Street, bombed site, Liverpool).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. W. PARRY.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, 12 noon: Mr. L. ENRY. (Highbury Corner).—7 p.m.: Mr. L. ENRY.

Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barkers Pool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. A. SAMMS.

South London Branch N.S.S. (Brockwell Park, Herne Hill).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: A Lecture.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Marble Arch, Hyde Park).—Sunday, 6 p.m.: MESSRS. E. BRYANT, C. E. WOOD and E. PAGE.

Worsthorne.—Friday, August 12, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.

OUTDOOR

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

SECOND-HAND BOOKS. Wants List Welcomed. Michael Boyle, 30, Parliament Hill, N.W.3.

THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH

ON the cover of a brochure that I recently received were the boldly printed words, "Do Miracles Happen To-day?" In smaller type below came the statement, "The Answer Demonstrated During the Great Revival and Divine Healing Campaign." From this, I gathered that miracles do happen, but are controlled by these Ambassadors of Christ, for that is their self-styled title.

Inside the work is a page upon which are given details of "Our Speakers," one of whom is said come with a "red-hot message," surely such a message will be uncomfortable to the speaker. The same speaker has a "special appeal to young men and women." Perhaps it is the "red-hot" nature of his words that is the attraction, in the way that strong drink appeals . . . there is a kick in it, and the young need that which is powerful, specially in "God messages," for in the dawning Age of Reason they are far more sceptical than of yore.

The authority for preaching as they do is "The Word of God," and they cite Mark 16, verses 15-18 amongst a couple of other New Testament scripts. Now, the above-named quotation says: "Go ye into the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." I wonder whether they really do go forth with a joyous spirit and preach the Gospel to the nearest cow, dog, cat or horse, and if so, I wonder how many converts they have to date? It must be an interesting congregation on a holy day.

Their creed is given on the back of the little "puff," and I think that you may like to hear one or two of the eleven principles in which they believe. The first is the usual mathematical marvel . . . Three in One . . . enough said. The second is a pretty demoralising statement: The utter depravity of human nature . . . the Eternal Doom of the finally impenitent. If human nature is utterly depraved then why repent, for that would be endeavouring the impossible as the word utterly precludes the slightest grain of anything other than depravity. These Ambassadors seem to be wasting time on looking for something that just isn't there.

The next item is the Virgin Birth, Sinless Life, Atoning Death, Triumphant Resurrection, Ascension, and Abiding Intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ; His second coming and Millennial Reign upon earth. What a prospect. They honestly think, believe and claim to know of this coming event, rule of the absolute of depravity by the absolute of perfection. He will need a wisdom that passeth all understanding to take on a job like that.

This creed has eight more similar points, which only add to the usual structure of a "rational" church . . . Justification and Sanctification of the Believer; Baptism of the Holy Ghost; Nine Gifts of the Holy Ghost; Sacraments of Baptism by Immersion (the very thought makes me feel cold); Divine Inspiration . . . of the Holy Scriptures (that's one way of explaining them, I know another); Church Government by Apostles, Prophets (as a matter of interest, a prophet in the days of the scriptures was *not* a seer, but only a musician, therefore I gather that one section of this organisation is run by musicians), Evangelists, Pastors, Teachers, Elders and Deacons; the possibility of falling from Grace; and finally, the obligatory nature of Tithes and Offerings.

The final point is that to be found in all churches all over the world . . . give, give and then give a little more. They take from you and in return you are given

a one-way ticket to the "never-never" with a guarantee of eternal peace and other varying advantages of life in the place on the other side.

It may be of some encouragement to readers to hear that a railway guard who suffered from rheumatoid arthritis in the knees was healed in the twinkling of an eye by attending this church. Other than the obvious discomfort of being healed in such a confined space, as stated by the above expression, it would appear Divine intervention was evident, but how is another healing explained if that be so, for another gent was suffering from heart trouble which restricted his activities and after praying he was instantaneously healed and shortly afterwards he was passed A.I. for the army. As we all know, God moves in mysterious circles, but I can't yet see how or why he healed this fellow in order that he could be inducted into a body of professional murderers. Of course, it may be that his medical was like the first Great War type of placing a hand on the back and if it was warm . . . A.I. Even so, God is still inexplicable.

Will it be that I shall fall on my knees to beg forgiveness of the Mighty Unseen Power that treats us like so many cattle awaiting the slaughter? Shall I raise my voice in praise of that Kind Omnipotent Being that murders, maims and destroys? Shall I suddenly be seared by an all-consuming rush of flaming light that will bring to my soul that understanding which transcends all worldly knowledge? I wonder.

Perhaps I should fall on my knees in tears, tears of pity for my fellow beings, befuddled with the complexities of depths that do not exist. Perhaps I should rise up and laugh; laugh at these poor fools in their fear of the unknown which they think they know and in reality is *non est*. Or, perhaps, I should quietly leave my seat and the building, and there in the bright sun light of a lovely day, with the freedom of space about me, feel an overpowering nausea growing up within me until I should be forced to vomit in disgust. . . Who knows what I should do, for in truth I have no desire to find out, the reaction produced by the literature is enough to inoculate my curiosity.

PETER CROSS.

THE BLIND HILLS

Oft as I walked, where sun and cloud contended,

Oft as I trod some old familiar range,

On whose fair face bright hues of purple blended,

With blues, and greens, and reds, rich riot strange,

How happy then was I to see no change!

In later years, revisiting those places—

In cold, tempestuous, or summer's air—

Time had not stricken them like human faces;

I saw no decadence, no wrinkles there:

How could they stay so changeless, and so fair?

How else? Might senseless sands, unfeeling stones,

Have any thought for mortal cares and fears—

That pasture flocks, then swallow their bleach'd bones:

Alike insensible to smiles and tears,

To children's love, or friends of vanish'd years?

How like the dual diety, whom eant

Has called both God of love and Lord of Hell—

Their beauty is a sham that doth enchant

And then betray! So trusting soldiers fell

For country's sake; their memory died as well!

A. SLATER.