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## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### The Evolution of Christianity

IN the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when Europe began to emerge from the millennial tyranny of the Church and articulate Freethought on religious matters became again possible, the situation as between Christianity and its critics was a comparatively simple one. On the one hand was an intolerant and firmly established Church, Catholic or Protestant, with a rigid system of dogmatic theology, the orthodox acceptance of which was regarded as essential to eternal salvation. Whilst outside the pale of Christianity was a small minority of rationalist critics, themselves sub-divided into Deists, Agnostics, and Atheists; all, however, united in their common rejection of the supernatural claims of Christianity, whether as taught by the authority of the Roman Catholic Church or of the Protestant Bible.

To-day, the situation is more confused and the dividing line between Protestant Christianity and Rationalism is nothing like as clear as it was in the hey-day when Protestant bibliolatry was at its peak and the conflict between religion and science made the welkin ring; the *era of the Dean Burgons and the Bishop Wilberforces*, when every comma of the Sacred Scriptures was conceived as the personal work of the Divine Penman and, as such, unalterable and infallible, and when the evolution controversy resolved itself for religious orthodoxy into the famous dilemma is man "an ape or an angel?" Like Disraeli, the original proponent of this historic question, Christian orthodoxy came down on the side of the angels.

In the mid-twentieth century there are no longer these absolute dividing lines between Christianity and its critics except in the now restricted areas in Anglo-Saxon and other Protestant lands where Roman obscurantism still prevails or the Salvation Army nightly exhorts its primitive audiences to be "washed in the blood of the Lamb." Elsewhere, in more educated Christian circles the old dogmas are no longer professed with the same east-iron certainty as characterised the era of Paine, Bradlaugh, and Huxley.

Hell-fire has been "dismissed with costs," mankind's "special creation" is no longer insisted upon in most theological circles, and the rationalist principle which appeared so shocking to Christian orthodoxy when first expounded in *The Age of Reason* that the "Bible must be interpreted like any other book" is now accepted, wholly or in part, by the majority of Protestant theologians of whom quite a number are as radical in their critical conclusions, as was the author of *The Age of Reason*. Dr. Barnes and the editors of the *Encyclopaedia Biblica* represent conspicuous, but by no means unique examples of this school of radical religious thought.

We doubt whether there is to-day a single Bishop of the Church of England, or a single Protestant theologian with any respect for his reputation, who would formally

deny in set terms either the theory of Evolution or the necessity for *some* modification of the traditional views of Biblical verbal inspiration which were the commonplaces of evangelical theology less than a century ago. It is only amongst backwater sects entirely alien to modern culture, such as the Salvation Army, and the Plymouth Brethren, that the old dogmas are still fanatically upheld. And, of course, the Vatican still officially upholds the traditional creeds, but even here, as close students of current Catholic dogma are aware, the serpent of modernism is already tasting cautiously but steadily the Tree of Knowledge in the obscurantist Garden of Eden.

The evolutionary, indeed, revolutionary changes which have transformed the theology of the Protestant Churches within the lifetime, say, of George Bernard Shaw, represent a truly remarkable victory for the principles of Rationalism inside the once closely-guarded fold of Christianity. Were Thomas Paine to revisit our modern world and churches, he would undoubtedly be surprised, perhaps even flattered at finding so many Christian Bishops and professional theologians repeating as veritable commonplaces the daring paradoxes of *The Age of Reason* which, when first enunciated, aroused such fury throughout the length and breadth of Christendom. If, like so many great pioneers, Paine and Bradlaugh lived hard and stormy lives, time has abundantly justified them and has brought its appropriate revenge!

But what of the future? It is clear that whether they themselves accept it or not, evolution applies to the Churches as well as to more mundane institutions. The Christianity professed by, say, the Modern Churchmen's Union would have represented unthinkable blasphemy not only to medieval Christianity but equally to the Protestant Reformers, who, quite unsuspecting what the future would bring, actually set in motion the religious revolution which ended the totalitarian rule of Rome and thereby made religious toleration, and thus secularism, possible.

It is, however, quite certain that neither Luther, who condemned Copernicus long before the Vatican, nor Calvin, who burnt Servetus for denying the orthodox dogma of the Trinity, either foresaw, or desired such a consummation. Yet, historically, it appears to be as certain as anything can well be, that without the Reformation, modern Freethought could never have arisen. Luther is the remote but authentic ancestor of the National Secular Society. How the pious Martin would have loathed his distant offspring! Would he not have called off the Reformation itself and made a prompt submission to Rome had he foreseen what his offspring would do to the Holy Bible?

The evolution of Protestantism which may be said to have begun with the "left wing" religious sects in and around Cromwell's Army has now got as far as our modernist theologians who are steadily whittling down the province of the Supernatural, and in the extreme

form taken by modern Unitarianism are steadily approximating to a simple Humanism, scarcely Christian, and, indeed, barely Theistic in content.

All the present odds are that, wherever religion does not break altogether with culture and revert to an extreme obscurantism hardly tenable for long under modern conditions, it will continue to evolve in the above direction. It is, for example, deeply significant that the most celebrated theologians of to-day are those most adept in gracefully abandoning traditional dogmas and not in establishing them as was the case in the more robust "Age of Faith."

The universal evolutionary principle which embraces mankind and all his works is also at work in the religious sphere, transforming its old enemy, Christianity, out of recognition—and eventually, out of existence.

F. A. RIDLEY.

### CONTRACEPTIVES AND AUTOMATIC MACHINES

THE point of view expressed in the article of Mr. W. O. Bowers in *The Freethinker* of April 16, 1950 is an interesting example of what no doubt forms a considerable proportion of the public opinion in this country towards sexual matters. But before I deal with this article in so far as it criticises my article in *The Freethinker* of March 5, and 12, 1950, I want to make it quite clear that I am not going to allow myself to be drawn into a general discussion as to the lawfulness or unlawfulness of extra-marital intercourse. The purpose of my article was not to defend that form of sexual intercourse, but it was to denounce the cruelty and inhumanity of those who wish to take away from young persons a safeguard which tends to prevent ruin and disease.

I set out in my article, I thought, with sufficient clearness and force, the most important of the terrible consequences which may possibly follow from extra-marital intercourse. I, however, propose to repeat them categorically as follows: (1) the social ruin of a young woman who becomes an unmarried mother; (2) the stigma of illegitimacy placed on an innocent child born out of wedlock; (3) illness which may last a life-time arising from venereal disease; (4) the inheritance by an innocent child from either parent of venereal disease resulting in that child becoming deformed or blind or a mental defective.

Apparently Mr. Bowers admits that the sale of these articles may tend to lessen these horrors, for he says: "That contraceptives prevent the passing on of venereal disease, and prevent conception may be true. . . ." He however, in company with the Archbishop of Canterbury, other ecclesiastical dignitaries and, it would seem, the majority of the Members of Parliament in effect says that the safeguard afforded by these articles must as far as possible be removed from young persons.

If a man deliberately removes a safeguard against a peril his conduct is really the same as if he had deliberately created that peril. One could give numerous examples to illustrate this truth. I shall be content to give two examples which are quite sufficient for this purpose. A man sees a house on fire and then deliberately cuts the telephone wire which is attached to the house with the result that the occupants are unable to call the fire brigade without a considerable amount of delay. The house is burnt to the ground before the fire brigade arrives half an hour afterwards. If the telephone wire had not been cut, the fire brigade would have arrived in

a few minutes. A man is out at sea in a rowing boat. He sees another rowing boat capsize and the occupants in the water swimming frantically towards a life-belt which is being taken away by the tide. He rows up to the life-belt, pulls it into his boat and then rows away leaving the capsized persons to swim as best they can to the shore. One of those persons is overcome with exhaustion and is drowned.

On the principle that a man is presumed to intend the natural consequences of his acts, the conduct of each of the two men in these examples in taking away a safeguard against disaster is tantamount to having deliberately caused the particular disaster which results from his malicious act. Similarly the conduct of the authorities in removing this safeguard from young persons is tantamount to having actually caused the tragedies that must result from such removal. But their conduct is even more intentional than the conduct of either of the two men. Even the man who cuts the telephone wire cannot be absolutely certain that the fire brigade would take as long as half an hour to arrive, or indeed that the house would be completely gutted. In the case, however, of the removal of this safeguard the authorities must know with absolute certainty that at least a considerable number of these tragedies will inevitably result from such removal. Their conduct, therefore, is particularly wilful and indeed malicious, and amounts to the deliberate imposition of savage penalties which have not been prescribed by the criminal law.

Our fatuous legislators have recently abolished corporal punishment for crimes of violence, no matter how brutal and cold-blooded they may be, and the reason they give is that such a punishment is too severe. Nevertheless they are ready to inflict penalties, in their nature sometimes far worse than corporal punishment, on young inexperienced persons whose sole fault in many cases, especially where the victims are young girls who have been seduced, is to succumb to the temptation which nature has placed before them with almost irresistible force. They are also ready to inflict on innocent children the most appalling penalties, the nature of which I have already described.

It is interesting to see that Mr. Bowers is not one of those devil worshippers whose opposition to preventive measures against the possible evil results of extra-marital intercourse is based on the doctrine that it is wrong to interfere with the designs of their demon God who has provided these horrors as a punishment for sin. His main reason, however, for removing this safeguard appears to be contained in the penultimate paragraph of his article in which he reminds me that "the available supply of young women with no sexual experience would have a definite tendency to become less and less if these machines were available all round."

The meaning which can be fairly extracted from the sentence is that innumerable young women should have their lives ruined, innumerable young persons of both sexes should become permanent invalids, and innumerable innocent children should become deformed or blind or mentally defective in order that there should not be any decrease in the supply of pure brides for the delectation of their husbands the ante-nuptial purity of whom would never be demanded.

If he were really consistent, he ought to favour the prohibition of the sale anywhere to any person, not only of these articles, but also of all contraceptives of any kind, and of all prophylactics sold with the object of preventing infection from venereal disease, because,

his assumption about the supply of pure brides is a valid one, then that supply would be still more likely to be maintained intact if these drastic measures were taken. In fact, he really ought to go further on his way to advocate purity at all costs by following the example of the devil worshippers who, in the year 1746, opposed the founding of the Lock Hospital, and he ought to favour the prohibition of all medical treatment of venereal disease contracted by means of extra marital intercourse.

I cannot conclude without referring to Mr. Bowers's inaccurate remarks about the Army supply of these articles. The authorities of the Army and of the other fighting services are not concerned with the question of the necessity or the entertainment value of extra-marital intercourse. Their one motive in supplying these articles and other prophylactics is to prevent disease and thus to ensure the efficiency of the fighting forces. From the point of view of the devil worshippers, if they were logical, this policy would be wrong and sinful, but from the point of view of common sense, which is generally respected when the safety of the nation is at stake, this policy is eminently justified.

J. H. G. BULLER.

### GERALD MASSEY

#### "Lives of Great Men All Remind Us"

HE was an eminent champion for "The Rights of the People," having in his boyhood bitter experiences of hard living, being dragged from bed at 5 a.m. to start work in field, factory or on a barge with his father whose weekly wage was "a pound a week," so that Gerald well understood in his maturer days the meaning of Elizabeth Browning's, "Cry of the Children."

Gerald worked in a straw-plait factory, earning 1s. 6d. a week, in the town of Tring, Herts, where he was born, May 29, 1828.

Not satisfied with slavery, he walked to London and found employment in a Regent Street shop as errand boy, but was discharged for "dawdling"; but, the fact was that Gerald was interested by examining the books on the secondhand bookstalls. Reading and reasoning, Gerald improved his education so that in 1849 he edited "The Spirit of Freedom" as Chartist propaganda.

Massey co-operated with Charles Kingsley and F. D. Maurice, saying he couldn't be a slave, so became a rebel, a poet of revolt against oppression, the chief poems, in two volumes, issued in 1895, with the title, "My Lyrical Life," which he said was his passport "to the homes of the poor, and they will trust me." Walter Savage Landor declared that Massey's "Ballad of Babe Christabel" contains some of the most beautiful and lofty thoughts expressed in lyrical language.

Years ago, I, with others, tried to organise The Gerald Massey Literary League and invited his eldest daughter, Miss Christabel Massey, to be our first President; and in her letter to me, dated September 1, 1922, she remarks, "Thank you for your kind remarks, and I assure you it was a real pleasure to me to hear such appreciation of my dear father's work, as you have expressed."

Miss Massey told me of her father's boyhood; at the age of eight years he worked in a local silk factory, twelve hours daily, with a beginner's wage—9d. a week!

It is exceedingly strange how the recognition of Gerald Massey's poetical genius came about. Hepworth Dixon, the scholarly editor of the "Athenæum," caught in a

rain-shower, took refuge in a newsagent's shop. Looking over the publications for sale, he read on a front cover "Fling out the red Banner; come gather ye champions of Right," and similar words with a W. J. Linton illustration, and this so impressed him as well as a volume of Massey's poems that Massey was employed on the permanent staff with Dixon in the editorial office of the "Athenæum." From this time forward, his works made him recognised as a poetical genius and a splendid writer of English prose. All first-class periodicals and newspapers eagerly sought Gerald Massey's literary productions, and to name a few celebrities who applauded Massey there were: John Ruskin, Lord Tennyson, George Eliot (who took Massey as her model for *Felix Holt, the Radical*), Bulwer Lytton, Matthew Arnold, and Massey's great friend, Captain Sir Richard Burton, K.C.M.G., the celebrated Arabic scholar and translator of the *Arabian Nights*.

Gerald Massey was also exceedingly popular in America as a lecturer, as proved by reports in the U.S. Press. One of Gerald Massey's masterpieces is the *Secret Drama of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, with a special chapter, "The Vilification of Shakespeare and Bacon," over 400 pp., published at one guinea, 1888. His criticisms, all verified by contemporary authorities, show extraordinary research.

Yet, as Massey asserts, that with all his laborious writings, his thirty years' work and study of ancient Egyptology published in *A Book of Beginnings, The Natural Genesis and Ancient Egypt: The Light of the World*, lead all the rest. "They made my life worth living," he declared.

Truly he was a noble man with wonderful attainments and a charming countenance portrayed in a fine painted portrait of him, as I saw it, in Miss Massey's drawing room. He died, October 29, 1907, age 79; loved by all who knew him. The best eulogy to Gerald Massey's life and work was given by His Majesty's Commissioners when awarding him a Civil List Pension, as the official announcement put it, "In recognition of his services as a poet sprung from the People."

WM. AUGUSTUS VAUGHAN.

### DAWN BREAKS IN MEXICO

WHEN a book is written which deals with controversial subjects, the author is usually criticised for being a partisan of some particular political party, and consequently one whose views are always biased.

This charge cannot be levelled at the author of "Dawn Breaks in Mexico." The writer, Colonel W. D. J. Osbaldeston Mitford, was honorary Attache to the British Legation in Mexico, serving under Sir Esmond Obey, K.C.M.G., the British Minister in Mexico.

This book, which will be an eye-opener, even to many Secularists, was first published in 1941 by Cassell Limited of London, Toronto, Melbourne and Sydney. The author points out that the ordinary educated man knows practically nothing about Mexico, and this applies also to Americans despite the proximity of their country to Mexico.

How many people realise the vast size of Mexico—a country as large as Germany, France, Italy, England, Belgium and Holland put together.

Very few people know anything of the political changes that have occurred in Mexico during the last 25 years.

Here was a country which, for three centuries was dominated by the R.C. Church; a country where only

6 per cent. of the people were literate; a country soaked in ignorance, squalor and superstition, a typical illustration of what happens when the R.C. Church takes command. This is what the author says of those three hundred years of priestly rule:—

“ For three centuries the Spaniards gave peace to Mexico, but at the price of the spiritual and economic slavery of the Indian. From 1521 until 1810 the Indian was bowed beneath the heel of religious and military despotism and sunk into a morass of moral, spiritual and physical disease . . . Cortez went to New Spain in search of gold, even as the early priests who accompanied him went in search of souls. While the Church saved the Indian's soul, Cortez tortured his body with the fetters of slavery. While the clergy baptised him with Holy water, Cortez baptised him with blood. The Church held above the Indian's head the Cross of Christ, and Cortez severed his head from his shoulders with a sword. The priests chained the Indian to the Rock of Ages, Cortez chained him to a pick and shovel in the gold mine.”

The claim of the Church to-day is that, to save the world from disaster, it is necessary to return to the teachings and faith of the one and only Church. For 34 years Mexico was governed by the tyrant Diaz (from 1878-1912). He was backed by the Army and the Church, and the latter received from him enormous concessions of land and special privileges. The clergy were the most wealthy, social entity in Mexico.

Again quoting from the book: “ The great land-owners (among them the English) often kept a priest on the pay roll for the devout purpose of teaching the Indian that, ‘ the meek are blessed, and shall inherit the earth.’ Hope and beans constituted the diet of the majority of the people at this period of Mexican history.”

During the years following the overthrow of Diaz in which the country was torn by civil wars, the Vatican used all its power to try to force the United States to declare war on Mexico. To the everlasting honour of President Woodrow Wilson, he absolutely refused to have anything to do with the suggested blood bath the Catholics were screaming for.

In 1924, when stable government was at last attained, they drove the Church out of politics. All religious teaching was forbidden in public and private schools, and the only legal marriage was that performed by the Civil Authorities, while the vast wealth of land stolen from the people was given back to the people. And all this has happened in the last 25 years.

The R.C. Church likes to boast of the enormous gains in converts they make every year, but on the subject of Mexico they maintained a discreet silence.

When Calles was elected President in 1924, he told a gathering of Press correspondents that the Church had supported every public man who has, from the time of the Spanish Conquest, been a foul stain upon the peace, happiness and progress of the masses of the people. Every leader who has ever fought against the liberties of the people in favour of darkness and oppression, has been supported by the Church and its high dignitaries.

The lying story of Catholic persecution is blown sky high by Colonel Mitford in this book. He says:—

“ It is not to be denied that the Roman Catholic Church in Mexico and in Central America has consistently opposed any teaching making for human liberty. I say that with all the assurance and all the vehemence of which I am capable.”

The author of this book is no rabid Communist or militant Atheist, but a keen observer and fair-minded critic whose official position, knowledge of the country and the language enabled him to speak with absolute authority.

“ The weapons the government are using in fighting ignorance and superstition are not those of force, but of reason,” the author says. “ It is the intention,” he writes, “ of the Mexican revolutionary government to eradicate from national affairs their (reactionary) influence, and that of their spiritual counsellors, and they propose to do so with the weapon of Public Education as their chief arm. Other tools are also now being used, but it is upon Public Education that these governments have relied and do rely for ultimate permanent, subjection of the reactionary element.”

Colonel Ingersoll said that the last battle for human liberty would be between Rome and reason. After three centuries of clerical domination the present rulers of Mexico have realised that the one weapon the Church cannot face is education.

Ask at your library for this book or, better still, try to buy a copy at a second-hand bookshop as it is more than likely it is now out of print.

F. A. HORNIBROOK.

## ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CHRISTIANITY

BY a wise dispensation of Providence, wrote Gibbon, the early ages of Christianity are shrouded in obscurity. The delightful note of irony in that sentence is reflected in the writings of various novelists. Let us give one example: a scene enacted in a vast round hall in Constantinople in the fourth century.

“ For my part,” shouted the high-priest Paphnutis. “ I shall uphold the opinions my forefathers taught me. According to the teaching of our holy father Athanasius, we must worship a single God in a Trinity, and the Trinity is a single God: the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Ghost is God, and yet they form together but one God!” As though smashing an imaginary enemy he brought down his enormous right fist into the palm of his left hand and glared triumphantly around the assembly.

A pale lean monk seized Paphnutis by the surplice. “ Father Paphnutis !” he shouted to raise his voice above the general clamour. “ What . . . what's all this about? Why it's no more than a dispute over a single word — isn't that so ?” And forthwith he began to narrate the terrible scenes he had witnessed in Alexandria and Constantinople—how the Arians had opened with wooden pincers the mouths of those unwilling to receive the Sacrament in heretic churches, and forced the host between their lips. In the Church of the Holy Apostles so horrible a struggle had taken place between Arians and Orthodox that the blood, overflowing the cistern which received the drainage of the building, had flowed down the steps in front of the western façade and streamed into the market-place.

“ Think, Father Paphnutis !” pleaded the monk. “ All over a single word. Why are we so torturing ourselves? It is horrible, horrible !”

But Paphnutis was adamant, and shouted: “ Let the enemies of God be silent! Never will I yield Anathema on the Arian heresy !”

In another group amidst this assembly of Bishops, Aetius, a bold and fervent disciple of Arius, and one who was looked upon as an atheist because of his audacious

and scoffing interpretation of the Trinity, was holding forth to those around him.

"The word 'God,'" Aetius was saying, "cannot be used of the Son, because He has never applied it to Himself. The Son has never even comprehended the essence of the Father, because it is impossible for Him who had a beginning to imagine that which has neither beginning nor end."

"Blaspheme not!" shouted an indignant Bishop. "Where is this Satanic audacity going to stop, my brethren?"

"Prove me wrong by philosophic reasoning, and I will acquiesce," replied Aetius. "Shouts and insults are proof of nothing but impotence."

"It is written in the Scriptures . . ." somebody began.

"Stuff and nonsense!" interrupted Aetius. "God has given intelligence to man that He Himself might be understood. I believe in logic of argument and not in texts." And with a contemptuous smile he threw his surplice around him.

The heated debate suddenly ceased when the Bishop of Singidion, known to be one of the Emperor's favourites, mounted the tribune in order to read from a long scroll of parchment the Imperial message to the Bishops.

"Constantius, the triumphant, glorious and eternal Augustus," he began, "to all the Bishops assembled in this Council . . ." etc. "And so, the Emperor demands the dismissal of Athanasius, the Patriarch of Alexandria, as a traitor," etc., etc.

Now that it was manifest which way the wind was blowing, there was an instant scramble to sign the scroll, but there was also a murmur of dissent.

"The Emperor calls himself *eternal*," one voice cried, "but nobody is eternal but God!"

Constantius who, as was his habit, was at this moment lurking behind a curtain in the hall, made a special note of the exclamation, and thrusting the hangings roughly by, he pushed unexpectedly in front of the assemblage. His face expressed anger, and a heavy silence fell upon the throng.

"Fathers," the Emperor began, suppressing his anger, "allow me, the servant of the Most High, to use my zeal under His Providence to a successful issue. Athanasius is a rebel, the chief violator of universal harmony and œcumenical peace."

Fresh murmurs arose. Constantius was silent and cast a look of surprise over the assemblage of Bishops.

Somebody shouted "Anathema upon the cursed Arian heresy!"

The Emperor grew pale. He was silent for a moment, then proceeded:—

"It is my will," he declared, "that Athanasius shall be laid low by the power God has entrusted to me. Pray that all these conflicts and controversies may cease, that the murderous heresy of the Sabæans, the partisans of Athanasius, may be destroyed, that the truth may shine into all hearts . . ."

Meanwhile Julian watched all, a contemptuous smile upon his lips, full of inward triumph.

The novel chosen for this essay is D. S. Merezhkovsky's *Death of the Gods* (*Smert bogov*) from his trilogy *Christ and Anti-Christ*, the first volume of which appeared in the 'nineties and the last on the threshold of the present century. Forty years ago this author's novels were freely translated and widely read in England, passing through several editions. Now they are well-nigh forgotten in England, while in Russia they are banned as the futile products of mysticism and symbolism. Nevertheless, in the freethought move-

ment the novel dealt with here is of considerable interest for the light it sheds on the official recognition of Christianity in the fourth century. Those who regard Gibbon's account as too "heavy" would find the subject more pleasantly clarified in the lighter account given in Merezhkovsky's novel—if they are lucky enough to come across an English translation in the secondhand bookshops.

"HIBERNICUS."

## ABYSSINIA AND CHRISTIANITY

AS a pendant to Mr. Ridley's article, April 30, and particularly its last paragraph, re Abyssinia's uncivilised condition after having the Bible in the Ethiopic language about the fourth century, with the priests having power over the people, it may be mentioned that one-fourth of the adult males were priests, monks, or deacons, and that the Church possessed one-third of the land. The people were noted for their superstition, dirt, arrogance, cruelty, and slavery. Education, literature, and art were unknown. Abyssinia (Ethiopia) was admitted in 1923 a member of the League of Nations on condition of reform in the slave trade.

Incidentally, seven Cardinal Archbishops, 23 Archbishops, and 44 Bishops were in favour of the Italian Fascist aggression on Ethiopia—which had been regarded by the Bishop of Nocera in 1935 as "but a mixture of uncivilised tribes."

When we hear so much about "Christian" civilisation, let us look to the Papal States (dissolved 1870), which surely should have proved a shining light, a model, and example to the world at large, in view of their claims as belonging to, and ruled by, the one and only true Divinely-appointed Christian Church. Mr. Joseph McCabe, in his *History of the Roman Catholic Church* (printed in U.S.A.), and in his *Rationalist Encyclopaedia* (Watts, London, 1948), tells us that "the Popes who now pose as the moral-social oracles of kings and States, left their own Kingdom, while it lasted, in the foulest condition"; to the British Ambassador, Lord Clarendon, it was "the opprobrium of Europe"; to the austere French priest Lamennais, "the most hideous sewer that ever offended the eye of man"; and to Catholic Lord Acton, it "contrived murder and massacre on the largest and also on the most cruel and inhuman scale." Mr. McCabe refers to the description thereof in the *Cambridge Modern History* and sums up: "Nowhere in Europe were there more banditry and crime, denser ignorance, more corrupt (clerical) officials, or more venal courts."

Mr. McCabe's *Rationalist Encyclopaedia* is a storehouse of facts, in handy reference form, which supplies a long-felt want. His article therein, "Crime and Religion" answers the claims of R.C. moral superiority. So, for U.S.A. does the book, *Religion and Roguery* (Truthseeker, New York) which gives summaries of official Prison and Penitentiary Returns concerning, among others, over 4,000 preachers with over 6,000 crimes, of whom 1,000 or so are detailed with date, place, name, religious denomination, and crime for which convicted—a disconcerting record for clerics who declare that men are Freethinkers because of their depraved character.

GEORGE ROSS.

## EPITAPH ON JOHN PENNY

Reader! Of cash, if thou'st in want of any,  
Dig four feet deep, and thou shalt find a penny.

## ACID DROPS

**So anxious** are the "scientists" to find the "Holy Shroud" authentic, that some of them tried the experiment of "crucifixion" on themselves to test their reactions. All sorts of theories have now been advanced about the actual cause of death, but obviously, as no one died, it is impossible to say anything for certain. One thing is pretty clear and that is that all the "scientists" believe it is the Holy Shroud just as thoroughly as the sheep who are not scientists—and, of course, they believe that there was a Crucifixion, and that Jesus Christ was the sufferer. For this, outside the story in the Gospels, there is not the slightest evidence—but perfect Faith never requires so material a thing as evidence.

**The R.C. Bishop of Salford** has warned Mr. George Tomlinson that, if he thinks the "education" issue will not be raised at the next General Election he will be quite disappointed. It is going to be Roman Catholic teaching for their children, and Protestant England will help to pay for it. And the Roman Church won't budge an inch on the issue. Well, we welcome the threat. The more there are of these threats the more chance for Secular Education.

**All sorts of difficulties** are at last being surmounted in the production of a film of Fatima—in fact, Catholics are firmly convinced that it is the Devil who is responsible for the setbacks. As one of them said so brilliantly recently, "After all, it is going to do him (the Devil) a lot of harm." No attempt will be made to personate the Virgin, but as the sun and stars won't oblige, the cameramen will manage to introduce them whirling about the Heavens when Mary appears. There is also going to be the Immaculate Heart of Mary on show, though regret is being expressed that it cannot be the real thing. Altogether the uplift such a film will bring must be tremendous!

**More grovelling!** In the *Universe* we get a photograph of the popular film star, Miss Irene Dunne and her husband in the usual attitude which the Roman religion enjoins anywhere near a priest or a church or a relic. If ever one wants to see the complete abnegation of reason and a complete subjection to Faith, take a look at all those unfortunates on their knees who really believe that grovelling is a sure sign of pious holiness.

**Christianity—the 1950 variety**—in the Holy City is as heavily policed as possible. In fact, a special branch, called the "Pilgrim Police," has been organised to prevent Christian pickpockets stealing from Christian Pilgrims. So far, *several hundred* pickpockets have been arrested and no doubt will be doubled or trebled before the Holy Year is out. The example of "our Lord" and his Holy Vicar does not appear to have had much influence—yet we are sure that all the delinquents are true sons of the Church.

**The "information"** mediums usually get from their spirit guides is usually so puerile and childish, that it is a constant wonder to us how any intelligent person can believe it. At last, however, we can report something useful as emanating from the "other side." When Miss Doris Greenwell, on her way to a spiritualist meeting, found buses so full that she despaired of getting to High Wycombe in time, "a spirit told her to go to Uxbridge."

Much against her will she did so, and a friendly policeman, a spiritualist also, arranged further transport for her to High Wycombe in plenty of time. When in trouble, ask a spirit—or a policeman.

**The advice of the Bishop of Exeter** who told Christian parents to make "A thundering nuisance of themselves until they found out what religious instruction was being given to their children at school," applies equally to Freethinkers. Let's all make a "thundering nuisance" of ourselves until religious instruction is barred altogether from schools.

**An application** to the Sunderland Food Committee by the Rev. C. Renshaw to serve breakfast to his early morning communicants "was favourably received" by the committee. One member said that if the serving of breakfast will attract people to church it will receive the most favourable consideration. Without a doubt, the Church can do with all the help it can get nowadays, but why a pious Food Committee should constitute itself a recruiting agency is a matter that should be questioned.

**In an address** to the Assembly of Unitarian Churches, Dr. Mortimer Rowe quoted Miss Dorothy Sayers as saying, "if Jesus were not God, He was either a liar, or a very dangerous lunatic and objectionable type." Well, Well! The Jews and the Romans, with whom Jesus was supposed to be contemporary, didn't think he was God, and we have noticed that quite a few modernist Christians are beginning to agree with them.

**According to the Rev. H. Veasey**, there is no reason why Parish priests should not work at an ordinary job for five days a week and attend to their clerical duties in their spare time. We agree, but what will his colleagues think of him? His reasons for thinking thus are really amusing and somewhat childish; he informed his congregation that all the Apostles worked for their living, which may or may not be true. In the end they gave up religion, and that stopped them working.

**Two items from the Daily Mirror**—without comment:—  
"They swept the road, they scrubbed away the mud, they made everything spick and span, for the King and Queen were coming to inspect the site of the Festival of Britain . . ."

"The King and Queen made the tour of inspection that took the workmen by surprise . . ."

**From the "Radical Humanist"** we take the following:—

"A Bengali bi-weekly, *Sapaha*, criticised the Congress Government for the callous and inhuman conduct towards political prisoners, and under the Emergency Powers Act, 1931, the newspaper was ordered to forfeit its security on the grounds that the criticism tended to bring the government into hatred and contempt."

The leopard, Indian or British, does not change its spots!

**Jesuit astronomers** have decided that the recent Flying Saucers are the invention of "a few persons of exalted imagination." Which sets us wondering. What would they have said if they had been living in the time of Jesus and had not seen his journey heavenwards known as the Ascension? Would they have called this yarn also the product of "an exalted imagination?"

# "THE FREETHINKER"

Telephone No.: Holborn 2601.

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

## TO CORRESPONDENTS

E. DYSON.—Thanks. Will be noted.

R. S.—Our *Bible Handbook* will give you all the ammunition you need. It is intensely disliked by Christians.

*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.

The following periodicals are being received regularly, and can be consulted at "The Freethinker" office: THE TRUTH SEEKER (U.S.A.), COMMON SENSE (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), DON BASILIO (Italy).

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.

Will correspondents please write on one side of the paper, and keep their letters brief. This will give everybody a chance.

Lecture Notices should reach the Office by Friday morning.

## SUGAR PLUMS

To-day, the Annual Conference of the National Secular Society will be held in the Grand Hotel, Sheffield. There will be a reception in the hotel on Saturday evening for members and friends. Morning and afternoon business sessions will be held on Sunday commencing at 10.30 a.m. and 2.30 p.m., at which only members of the N.S.S. holding the current card of membership can attend. There will be a public demonstration in the City Memorial Hall, Barkers Pool, at 7 o'clock, on Sunday, admission is free, with reserved seats 1s. each. On Monday morning a coach drive into Derbyshire has been arranged, returning in time to allow those wishing to return to their homes in the afternoon to do so. Most of the branches are sending delegates and there is sure to be many members, other than delegates, present.

The Dinner held by the Rationalist Press Association on May 18 last was very well attended, the dinner well served, and the dancing thoroughly enjoyed by the guests. Prof. A. E. Heath made a witty Chairman, and Prof. Barbara Wooton, Mr. Hamilton Fyfe and Dr. Stark Murray ably supported him with excellent speeches. The R.P.A. Dinners have always been a feature of the Association and this one kept up their past high standard.

The latest number of *The Journal of Sexual Education* is full of interesting and informative articles and reviews. Its editor, Dr. Norman Haire, has a witty and incisive pen and his answers to difficult sex problems are always both entertaining and instructive. Readers who are interested in all matters pertaining to sex can have no better guide and mentor than this forthright, outspoken Journal.

## CREATION MYTHS—WHAT THEY DO TO US

ALL the religions of primitive man, based on ignorance of the causes of natural phenomena—sun, darkness, death, dreams, wind, lightning, etc.—were engendered by fear of these the first gods, and the urgent need to propitiate them. Anyone who maintained he knew how best to do this became the first priest and boss. He even believed in his own hocus pocus, which is more than can be said for most of his modern descendants, judging from their own writings, declarations and disputes.

An explanation, however, of how things first began was clearly necessary from one in close personal communication with the god or gods, and the witch-doctors, sorcerers, hocus-pocus merchants and other sorts of priest had to think up some story or other in line with the particular mentality of their tribe, or else . . .

The legend eventually selected by the primitive Christian fathers—men as blissfully ignorant of the sciences of natural phenomena as your French poodle—from the vast accumulated mass at their disposal was actually no better and no worse than those of the older religions, and perfectly satisfactory in those uncritical days of total ignorance of the masses, and consequent limitless credulity. Knowing nothing, they could believe anything; like our present-day Sunday school children, poor, trusting little mutts; they'd swallow anything.

Religions to-day are, of course, nothing more than these primitive beliefs which have, through the centuries, been gradually modified, added to, expurgated, adjusted, faked-up, and in short what is nowadays euphoniously termed "re-translated" in the attempt to bring them more in line with the growing intelligence and expanding education of the nations concerned. The holy scriptures of the various gods need to be kept, wherever possible, up to the standard of enlightenment of their believers or they begin to lose prestige. This is just what is happening to Christianity now: this is one of the gods whose education has not been able to keep pace with the rapid advance in knowledge of his one-time trembling worshippers: Omniscience has become merely ridiculous. One priest actually wrote to the Press complaining that his class sometimes laughed at his teaching!

Two or three years ago it was our town's turn to be faced with the burning question—should our cinemas be open on Sundays? A question of much more momentous import than appears on the surface. I was not particularly interested one way or the other, personally, but, actuated by my strong reaction against the idea of one section—and that obviously a small and equally obviously a foolish section, mostly composed of old women (of both sexes) and priests with their axes to grind—trying to dominate and arrange the lives of the rest of the community, I wrote to the *Daily Telegraph*.

The editor could not help but acknowledge my plea for the principle on which every court of law in the civilised world works, i.e., that no case can be fairly judged until both sides of a question have been thoroughly examined, and a small portion of my letter was published, including the following sentence:—

"The whole sabbatarian case rests upon one thing and one only: the six-day creation legend, although most educated people know now that this planet was not created, but evolved, and not in six days but in hundreds of millions of years."

This letter was copied and reproduced by the local paper (which had turned it down at first) and by two other papers, and contributed largely, I believe, towards our victory over superstition. My letter was followed by one from a priest backing up my evolution, and even

going further in saying that "every intelligent Christian realises that science has demolished the creation legend"! Having been forced by sheer weight of scientific evidence to abandon this ancient myth he then tried to make the best of a bad job by directing our attention to the heart-breaking picture of the cinema operators prevented by their work from going to church (silver collection), although anyone not so ignorant would have known that this old argument has been rendered absurd over and over again by letters and articles in the Press from workers themselves pointing out that, not being slaves, they are not forced to work on Sundays, that they do it voluntarily, and that in any case they and their Unions are perfectly capable of looking after themselves without the interference of any half-baked priest (I quote from a Press cutting). Also, had this priest known his stuff as thoroughly as I myself do he would have remembered that the only reason for "keeping holy the Sabbath day" given in the Fourth Commandment (handed to Moses by Jehovah in person, according to the Bible!) is: "for in six days the Lord made . . ." etc.

The superstitious or rational observance of Sunday stands or falls by this legend, however much its believers may squirm and try to wriggle round it. For example, an argument popular among priests, old women and small children mentally incapable of reasoning, to try to reconcile this foolish myth with modern knowledge, is that when Genesis speaks of "days" it really means millions of years. (It is curious that an omniscient god delivering an inspired message to mankind cannot make his meaning clearly intelligible!) If these misguided people were capable of a little logical thought they would perceive that "and the morning and the evening were the sixth day" quite unmistakably indicates just common-or-garden solar days between sunrise and sunset. They would also perceive that if, as they are trying to argue, this planet was *not* created in six days the whole foundation of their seventh day idea falls down and disappears!

This letter of mine seems to have caused an enormous commotion in Fundamentalist (Bible believer) circles, to judge by my fan mail. Pamphlets, tracts, and every sort of "revealed" information are still reaching me by post to-day, after nearly three years! Sheets and sheets of laborious manuscript from demented spinsters driven frantic by the imminent shortage of able-bodied men in heaven and anxious to see that my "vile" body rises again when my time comes. I received one really expensively bound and printed booklet which, after beating about the bush in every direction so as not to look like propaganda rubbish, finally "proved" that the creation story *must* be true because it was revealed to its author by God himself! This contribution was a real masterpiece of theological balderdash.

Another argument I am frequently treated to is that there are scientists who still believe in "creation." My reply is that only a very few years ago as anthropology reckons time there were scientists who still believed that the world was flat (as clearly indicated in the Christian Bible). Christopher Columbus was very nearly burnt at the stake for his argument that the world was round, this being regarded as blasphemous heresy by the then all-powerful Church.

As for Evolution, this is far too big and far too important a subject to be explained in a few lines here. I myself when a young man, eagerly searching for knowledge, spent many weeks poring over Darwin's famous *Origin of Species*, and I have read many others on that subject since then, but I fear that very few people can spare all that time nowadays just to get knowledge,

and specially when that knowledge may strike them as highly unpleasant disillusionment.

Anyone who genuinely and sincerely wants to find out for himself the true facts, *regardless of whether he will like them or not*, will have to study some sound but not too long book on the subject such as Sir Arthur Keith's *Darwinism and Its Critics*, one of the "Thinker's Library" series, or Admiral Beadnell's *Picturebook of Evolution*, published by Messrs. Watts and Co.

Some of Darwin's original theories attempting to account for variations in species have now been rejected or modified by subsequent discoveries but his main thesis stands like a rock, firm as when first published, the greatest shock ever delivered to religious superstitions all over the world, superstitions being defined as belief in supernatural agents, souls, spirits, devils, etc.

The student will find—once his attention has been steered in that direction—that evolution simply stares him in the face. On the fishmonger's slab, in his own partially re-adapted body, in the horse that pulls the dust-cart, in the strata forming the seashore cliffs, in the chrysanthemums in his garden, the half-formed star in the sky. If he still does not see it then it can only be that he is mentally deficient, or that part of his otherwise quite efficient brain remains incurably warped by all the religious superstition drilled into his head when a child, or just simply that *he doesn't want to believe it*, to believe in the plain evidence of his senses. The true religious mentality is probably a composite of all these three states.

M. C. BROTHERTON.

## FREEDOM AND CHOICE

MAN is freedom; he chooses, he must choose, even in choosing not to choose, says Sartre. This is an example of rhetorical nonsense; a clever play on words. Freedom is the power to act as we *must*. Thus, freedom is equated with necessity, with the categorical imperative. Choice is a dilemma, freedom an illusion.

The ancient sophists, such as Plato, who first used the word dialectic, proceeded with the method of putting the question to ensnare their opponents, so as to lead to self-contradiction. The modern sophist dispenses with the preliminaries, makes self-contradictory statements, leaving his readers to accept self-contradiction or to admit defeat. So here, to resolve the contradiction, we have to face the question begging mis-statement of the case. Dialectical Materialism facing both ways, says man makes circumstances as much as circumstances make man; and this to back up the assertion that we know sufficient about history, barring accidents, to predict the future.

Now, as accidents are unaccountable, this saving clause is an assertion of ignorance, of insufficient knowledge. Like the old statement that given sufficient knowledge of the past, the future could be foretold, it is really an open admission of insufficient knowledge. It is the doctrine of predestination, which, based upon ignorance, logically denies either choice or prophesy in the assertion that what is to be will be. But the position is that if we predict a certain event and then act so as to avert it, it does not happen and our prediction is falsified by our action; while if we assert that something would have happened had we acted otherwise, we assert prophesy and choice of action without any evidence of either.

But if we can change the course of events we do so by our actions. The future is not determined by history by the past, but by our present action. This assertion of



ignorance, of insufficient knowledge, is a failure to account for, either our choice of, or the consequences of, our actions. But if freedom is indentified with power, it not only involves prevision or clairvoyance but also telepathic prophetic control, for if we act as we must, then we determine what the future *must* be. The categorical imperative extends into the future. Clairvoyance claims that the future co-exists with the present and can be seen now; but this assertion claims that the future can be controlled through the medium of past history.

Free Enterprise or Freethought, being historical, should then enable us to predict the future, they certainly have their consequences. But this assertion of ignorance or insufficient knowledge for prediction turns out to be a basis for a claim of power to control the future. Now, if we are sure that our actions determine the future, that the future must be the consequence of our action, then this postulate of ignorance can only apply to our choice of action. This talk of a mystic power to act is devoid of any concept of a time relation. Action is subsequent to or consequent upon any choice, so that choice involves prediction even of our actions. And this denial of choice is simply a justification of our ignorance, for our actions are the unaccountable accidents.

In other words, it is nothing more than an elaborate excuse for doctrinaire assertions which leave us with the contradictions; and this explains the logic of convenience and expediency of our doctrinaire Planners. So far from such argument having any logical compulsion, it is unconvincing in being so abstract as to have no valid significance. So that the assertion of power lacking the force of argument, needs the argument of force, which is a denial of freedom. It is useless juggling with these elementary indefinable words and a flat contradiction is no answer to a conundrum. The assumption of the identity of opposites does not facilitate a choice which is dependent upon the ability to differentiate.

And what of Freedom? Choice is plainly limited by available alternatives; does in fact further limit such alternatives; is an act of limitation. It is absurd to talk of free choice. One might as well speak of the planets as free to move in their orbits. It is equally absurd to talk of freedom as an illusion or an unattainable ideal. The word free suggests an absence of limitations; such a world would be fantastic; but by that criterion can be identified. In Dreamland we walk through brick walls, fly through the air, overcome all limitations. Freedom is the stuff of dreams.

It has been said that dreams are the expression of deep, unconscious cravings. So also, freedom; it only has meaning in terms of human feelings and passions. Just as the dream refuses limitations and restrictions, so is the desire for freedom a revolt against restraint and power. And so insidious is power, that as Bradlaugh said, eternal vigilance is the price we must pay. But if freedom is a dream it is lunacy to assert there is no alternative to power. Mutual aid, not contradiction, is the need of social life.

H. H. PREECE.

Say what is Honour? 'Tis the finest sense  
Of justice which the human mind can frame,  
Intent each lurking frailty to disclaim,  
And guard the way of life from all offence,  
Suffered or done.

WORDSWORTH.

THOUGHTS ON RELIGION  
VIII.

THERE are two other references in the Bible to the creation of the world by the word of God. The first is in Psalm XXXIII, verses 6 through 9:—

“By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.

“He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses,

“Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.

“For he spoke, and it was *done*; he commanded, and it stood fast.”

The second is in Hebrews, XI, 3:—

“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.”

The first text quoted probably refers to the account of the creation in Genesis. While a Christian exegete might make verse 6 appear to be a Jewish statement of the theory of the Word, there is little in it resembling the theory of the Greek philosophers that the creative principle of the world was the Logos. The Jews were an unphilosophical and unmetaphysical people; and it seems to me that in the Hebrew the verse refers to the literal word of Jehovah however translated by the Greek. The Hebrew does not mean reason, thought, or principle, but primarily means speaking, speech, or word. In *Against Heresies*, Book I, Chapter XXII, Deviations of Heretics from the Truth, Irenæus, 120-202 A.D., quoted Psalm XXXIII, 6, and John I, 3, in connection with the creation of the world by the Word; and this shows that at that time the confusion between the literal word of God and the Greek creative principle existed, and that the Christian theory of the Word is a mixture of Jewish and Greek ideas. It is possible that a part of the Scriptures to which Irenæus referred was a Greek translation of the Old Testament; and in such a translation Psalm XXXIII, 6, might easily resemble the first chapter of the Gospel of John.

The second text apparently expresses the Christian conception of the creation of the world out of nothing; and an examination of the Greek original reveals that Paul, the supposed writer of Hebrews, was not writing of the Word.

In the first of the letters which are said to have been written by John and in the Revelation ascribed to him, there is further mention of the Word. In I John, I, 1-3, is an involved statement which is reminiscent of the first chapter of the Gospel of John. The statement reads:—

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life.

“(For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.)

“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

Chapter II of this letter shows that the writer of the letter believed that the Logos was the literal word of God. Verses 7, 14 and 24, apparently refer to the Word as a verbal emanation which is from God, which has existed from the beginning, which was incarnated in the form of Christ, and which the Christians have heard from the beginning.

Verses 7 and 8 of I John, V, are an expression of the doctrine of the trinity which is really a unity and of which the Word is a person:—

“For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.”

“And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.”

The authenticity of verse 7 has been doubted for perhaps 450 years. The verse occurs in some of the older Greek texts and Latin translations including the Vulgate and in the Authorized Version, but has been omitted in several Greek texts edited during and after the first part of the sixteenth century; it has also been omitted in the Revised Version. Two notable Greek texts in which it has been rejected are Tischendorf's *Novum Testamentum Graece* and Westcott and Hort's *The New Testament in the Original Greek*.

There is a fanciful description of the Word in the Revelation, XIX, 11-15:—

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

“His eyes *were* as a flame of fire, and on his head *were* many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.

“And he *was* clothed with a vesture dipped in blood; and his name is called The Word of God.

“And the armies *which were* in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

“And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.”

The curious symbolism of the sword which goes out of the mouth of the Word, further confirms the fact that with the early Christian writers the meaning of Logos in the sense of reason, thought, or principle, was either unknown or unheeded; for the symbolism, if it means anything at all, evidently represents God's spoken Word, which, as we are told in Hebrews, is sharper than any two-edged sword.

Philo Judæus, born about 20 B.C., conceived in his book, *On the Creation*, that the God of the Hebrew Bible made two worlds, one a world perceptible only to the intellect and serving as the plan by which the second world, the material world, was made. The intellectual archetype of the material world was the reason of God. Philo's mixture of Greek philosophy with the teachings of the Old Testament was not too clear. His philosophy is said to have influenced Neoplatonism and Christian literature; it is not known if John was influenced by it, if he was, his theory of the creative principle of reason which was with God and was God and was finally incarnated as a man, little resembles the theory of Philo.

The New Testament doctrine of the Word is no doubt the result of the influence of Greek philosophy. In making their religion, the Christians borrowed generously from the Jews; and there is no reason why they could not borrow from the Greeks; indeed, it is strange, given the fact that the New Testament was written in Greek, that it does not show more influence of Greek philosophy. Unless it is the conception of the Word, there is no Greek philosophy in the New Testament; and the explanation of this absence, which is in contrast to the place held by Greek philosophy in the works of intelligent Romans, is that the writers of the New Testament were unlearned and opposed to all philosophic thought. In addition,

some of them were Jews, and in Jewish fashion remained for the most part immune to the Greek and Roman cultures in which they lived; and the Christianity which they established is essentially a Jewish product. The theory of the Word is an anomaly in the New Testament.

With the Greeks the reasonable or intelligent creative principle of the world was a profound conception; the Christians in their religion have made of it a theological jumble which is based on the misinterpretation of a Greek word and on the influence of the religion of the Jews who believed that they received through the inspiration of their leaders and prophets, the literal word of God. The Christians have inherited this belief, which has been sustained in part at least by the existence of the Bible which is supposed to be the recorded word of God.

WILLIAM RITTENOUR (U.S.A.)

## FREETHOUGHT DICTIONARY

**CONVERSION.**—Change from one state into another. The main practitioners of this process are chemists and bible bangers. Thus, in the laboratory, the alchemists' dream of transmutation of metals is accomplished fact; though his other, that of an elixir of life, lags behind schedule almost as badly as a five-year plan or the bible bangers' dream of the conversion of mankind.

This is mainly because the chemist is a complete materialist. Obviously the transmutation of, say, a handful of carbon into an industrial diamond is a beneficial object if economically sound. As such it is a desirable end, worthy of endeavour. An elixir of life, if it were to prolong the existence of the Babbits, the Gantrys, the politicians, bishops and similar gangsters, would be a most obnoxious end to research and does not receive serious consideration.

With the bible bouncer conversion has a very limited objective. Its aim is not really the regeneration of mankind, as commonly asserted, but the bringing of mankind to the Lowest Common Denomination of a professing Christian. This missionary zeal arises mainly from the almost universal susceptibility to messianic delusions. That is to say, the tendency of almost every human being to strut and caper as soon as he finds an audience willing to listen when he gets on his soapbox. Should any reader choose to hold me up as exhibit "A" he may have some justification.

With rare exceptions, missionaries are quite unable to see that the wife-beater next door; the murderer awaiting execution in the local jail; the street corner would-be seducer require conversion. These people already give lip service to God and are therefore "saved" whatever they do. The savage, on the other hand, is not only unlikely to be impressed by ranting than the man next door; he is also a man who lives at peace with his numerous harem; does not steal from the community because that community usually practises the gospel according to St. Marx; and usually commits murder only to avoid his own extinction before due date. Thus he is a Pagan and must be converted to save his soul. Which is to say he must be changed from a happy child of nature into a snivelling hypocrite, with all the virtues and none of the virtues of his mentor. A little thought on the subject also shows that those most susceptible to conversion are precisely those least worth converting which is why missionary moving of mountains only produces such very small molehills.

**IMMACULATE.**—Stainless, pure, undefiled. For the Christian this state is inextricably mixed up with the fact of conception. There were many Immaculate Conceptions around the Mediterranean Basin some couple of thousand or more years ago, a time which might be called the Age of Immaculate Conception. Contrarywise, this present age will undoubtedly be known as the Age of Immaculate Contraception.

F. W. RENNIE.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

**MARX AND MALTHUS**

**SIR.**—May I congratulate you and thank you for your publication of Mr. Cutner's leading article on the relative significance of Messrs. Marx and Malthus? This is, in my opinion, the most significant and important theme that *The Freethinker* has tackled for many a day. The details of "Higher Criticism" and the flaws in the "Gospels" pale into insignificance.

The pressure of expanding population on dwindling sources of supply makes Marx's arguments as to who is entitled to what, sound like tinkling cymbals; and I hope you will give Mr. Cutner (and those who think with him) increasing space in which to develop it!—Yours, etc.,

ARTHUR E. CARPENTER.

**CONTRACEPTIVES**

**SIR.**—With reference to S. E. Parker's article on "Contraception" appearing in *The Freethinker* of May 14, I should like to express my opinion that one is not necessarily a Christian and a reactionary merely on account of the fact that he objects to the introduction of the contraceptive slot machines. Nor does such an objection imply the conception of the sinfulness of the flesh, as Mr. Parker seems to think. One cannot deny the usefulness of contraceptives in our modern life, but the adult has ample facilities for obtaining these without their being introduced into public places and brought to the notice of those of tender years whose heads would be better occupied with other things.

One may take a broad view of the sexual relationship without allowing it to degenerate into license. Speaking of the double standard of morality—"that it is quite all right for a man to have a mistress, but that it is the deepest sin for his wife to have a lover"—Mr. Parker advocates extra marital sexual experiences for both men and women. Apparently such a thing as the love of the one man for the one woman has no place in his philosophy—a philosophy which is concerned solely with sexual gratification on the barn-yard level. Mr. Parker states that many unions are wrecked because the woman has no authentic experience of sexual relations, but he does not pause to consider that for every one such, there are probably thousands that are wrecked as a result of the laxity which he advocates. The present-day emphasis on sex is not, as some imagine, the result of advanced thought. It ranks no higher than an obsession—a sure symptom of degeneration.

One can still admire a pretty face, and engage in conversation with a member of the opposite sex, without having a slot machine at his elbow to enable him to wind up the proceedings.—Yours, etc.,

F. KENYON.

**OBITUARY**

**EUNICE POTTER**

The West Ham Branch N.S.S. has lost another of its old and faithful members by the death of Eunice Potter. A convinced Freethinker, she took a keen interest in every aspect of branch activity as well as in the Movement generally. Quiet, modest, but firm in her opinions and principles she won the respect and affection of her fellow members. The death of her husband just over a year ago was a severe blow and no doubt hastened a decline in her health. With members of the West Ham Branch we join in an expression of sympathy with the surviving members of her family in their loss.

The cremation took place at the City of London Crematorium, Manor Park, London, E., on Tuesday, May 16, when a Secular Service was read by the General Secretary N.S.S. before a gathering of relatives and friends in which the West Ham Branch N.S.S. was represented.

R. H. R.

**FLORENCE ELIZA HUGHES**

We regret to announce the death of Florence Eliza Hughes, aged 74, which took place following her removal to hospital. She held strong opinions on the uselessness of all forms of

belief in the supernatural as a solution for the social and economic problems of mankind. Her Freethought outlook on life and living was largely the result of a fertile intelligence brought to bear on the ordinary experience of social existence. She possessed many of the best of womanly qualities and her readiness to help will be missed in many places. Her remains were cremated at the South London Crematorium, Streatham Park, on May 18. There was a large assembly of relatives and friends and a Secular Service was conducted by the General Secretary N.S.S.

R. H. R.

**NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY**

**Report of Executive Meeting held May 16, 1950**

The Acting President, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, in the Chair.

Also present: Messrs. A. C. Rosetti, Morris, Griffiths, Ebury, Hornibrook, Page, Woodley and Barker.

Minutes of previous meeting read and accepted. Financial Statement presented.

New members were admitted to Glasgow, Manchester Branches and to the Parent Society.

Merseyside Branch Annual Balance Sheet was noted and the satisfactory financial state after the year's work commented upon.

Matter for a new leaflet was presented and a decision postponed until next meeting. Most of the time was given to details in connection with the Annual Conference after which the proceedings closed.

R. H. ROSETTI, General Secretary.

**LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.**

**OUTDOOR**

- Enfield.—Saturday, May 27, 6 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.
- Hancoat.—Wednesday, May 31, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.
- Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Platt Fields).—Sunday, 3 p.m.: Messrs. C. McCALL and G. WOODCOCK. (Bombed Site, St. Mary's Gates).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Messrs. C. McCALL and G. WOODCOCK. (Alexandra Park Gates).—Wednesday, May 31, 8 p.m.: Messrs. C. McCALL and G. WOODCOCK.
- North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, 12 noon, Mr. R. A. CALVERLEY. (Highbury Corner).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. R. A. CALVERLEY.
- Rawtenstall.—Friday, May 26, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.
- West London Branch N.S.S. (Marble Arch, Hyde Park).—Sunday, 4 p.m.: Mr. C. E. WOOD.

**INDOOR**

- Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Satis Cafe, 40, Cannon Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "Free Village Community in England," Mr. A. THORNWELL.
- National Secular Society (City Memorial Hall, Barker's Pool, Sheffield).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Freethought Demonstration. For details see advertisement.
- West Ham Branch N.S.S. (Loco. Men's Institute, 62, Forest Lane, Stratford).—Tuesday, May 30. A meeting, 8 p.m.

**NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY**  
CITY MEMORIAL HALL, BARKERS POOL, SHEFFIELD

**Freethought Demonstration**  
**WHIT-SUNDAY MAY 28th, 1950**

Chairman : R. H. ROSETTI

Speakers :

- |                                              |                                 |                                     |
|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>J. T. BRIGHTON</b><br>(Chester-le-Street) | <b>J. CLAYTON</b><br>(Burnley)  | <b>H. DAY</b><br>(Bradford)         |
| <b>L. EBURY</b><br>(London)                  | <b>F. A. RIDLEY</b><br>(London) | <b>T. M. MOSLEY</b><br>(Nottingham) |

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