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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

A Religious Slander

SOMEONE, I forget whom, defined man as a religious animal. Then someone else elaborated the definition by saying that man is an *essentially* religious animal. The first form of the definition was a libel on the human race. Its elaboration made the definition calumnious, and if there existed a high court of the universe, each of the parties concerned deserved prosecution for defamation of character. To say that man is an animal, even the only animal, that contracts religion may be true in the light of ascertained facts. It would be no more than saying that man is an animal that contracts or develops some unpleasant disease. But to say that man is essentially religious—that is, he would not be man without a religion—is an insult so comprehensive that no repudiation, no collocation of mere words, can do justice to one's feelings. It saddles the whole human race, past, present and to come, with a limitless capacity for gratuitous misunderstanding, a misunderstanding that history proves to have been overwhelmingly evil in its consequences. Any man of feeling and imagination might well reply as did the old lady when first given in very graphic language an account of the sufferings of Jesus Christ, "Well, well, it is a terrible story, let's hope it isn't true."

Man and His Gods

The worst feature of this universal libel on human nature is that it is quite gratuitous in theory. "Essential" means the existence of something necessary to the thing before us. But it is quite obvious that belief in religion does not come under that head. There are increasing millions of men and women in the world who have no use whatever for ghosts and gods and spirits or supernaturalism in any of its fantastic forms. "Inevitable" is a much better word than "essential," because it is in closer conformity to the facts. This merely says that given a certain set of circumstances a predictable consequence will follow. And it must be granted that developing human nature being what it was the belief in "spirits" as the ruling forces in the world was inevitable. Probably if one could get at what a dog feels concerning the powers of man, or, better still, if we could contact with the mentality of an ape we might get a perfect appreciation of the conditions which caused man to populate the universe with myriads of "spiritual" beings that made a mere sport of the human race. Yet I do not know that even this would "fill the bill," for anthropologists are fairly well agreed in the conviction that there was a preanimistic stage in which there existed a no more definite form of religion than that of a vague kind of "force" with which man had to keep on good terms if he was to get the best out of life.

Personification of this primitive force takes place later. Man fashioned gods in his own image, but

never, or hardly ever, as Gilbert would have said, worked according to the best samples of humanity. For it very seldom happens that there are not some men who are better than the gods they worship. Were it otherwise the gods would never show an improvement at any time. The Bible god, for instance, would never have become the benevolent "father statesman" that he is at present. What the gods in all ages have desired is obedience and worship. On these two things they have lived and flourished. Bible readers will recall the satisfaction of God when he "smelled a sweet savour of sacrifice." It was part of the daily ration without which no god can exist for long. And they are as avid about this ration to-day as they ever were. They will do nothing without it because they can be nothing without it. All the gods the world has ever known have depended for existence upon the nourishment provided in prayer and sacrifice. When these were not forthcoming they faded into nothingness. It is the same story to-day.

Our Fatal Heritage

In terms of prevailing conditions the arrival of the gods was, as I have already said, inevitable. But their enthronement involved a terrible loss of time and the gods became an unmitigated nuisance. Man has but one way of learning—by the hard road of experience—and that means delay and endless frustration. Early experience suggested nearly everything that was wrong, and little that was right. A flat earth, a solid sky, a world populated with good and evil spirits—with an overdose of the latter—health and disease, good and bad fortune, everything under the control of supernatural agents, each as hungry for bribery as a waiter is for a substantial tip. Hundreds of thousands of generations had to pass before man was able to take an approximately accurate conception of the nature of the forces around him. And at every step of that development he found the gods stubbornly contesting each step of mankind's upward road. Even then the gods left behind them the marks of their long and drastic overlordship. For as the liberated serf is apt to show his freedom in acts of self-assertiveness, a mental trait that springs from his long-borne slavery, so in the mental make-up of the men and women of to-day is to be found the hundred and one petty superstitions that exist as unmistakable evidence of humanity's earlier history. Religion was not essential to human nature, but it was inevitable. And that inevitability involved humanity's greatest blunder and the seed-plot of some of humanity's greatest crimes.

A Final Protest

I have space for but a brief note on another topic, which in itself will serve to illustrate the truth of what I have said concerning the evil heritage of religion.

Human nature has its ugly side, but it also has an admirable one, and I wish to make a protest against the slanders that Christian writers and preachers cast upon the whole human race. If this slander was voiced by evangelical preachers only, one might smile and let it pass. They preach the simple and absurd doctrine that man is filled with sinful leanings, and can only do good by the aid of Jesus Christ. But when we find leading Churchmen endorsing the crude statement that there is no basis for human morality save in the belief in God, we begin to realise what an essentially *de-moralising* factor religion is in both theory and practice. I do not claim that these wholesale slanders are not in tune with Christianity, I affirm it. A profound distrust in human nature is one of its essential features. The whole scheme of salvation is built upon it. From the very outset Christianity has denied the possibility of human decency without supernatural enforcement. The only reason for the Christian mythology is that man is essentially vile, that "in Adam all men die"—morally and spiritually, and only in the miracle of the crucifixion can he be made alive. What the old Puritans called the rags of human morality are counted as evil tendencies if it lacks the supernaturalism of the Cross. When the Christian praises human nature it is not human nature in itself that he has in mind, but human nature enforced and controlled by Christian supernaturalism.

Fortunately for the human species—or that portion of it that came within the control of the Church—it is only a few who have been able to live up to the unintelligent theological pessimism of the Christian religion. When the Christian in Church hears of the essential vileness of human nature he diverts the application of the lesson and gratifies his own vanity by "passing the buck" on to others. When the preacher explains that man by himself can do nothing right without the conscious or unconscious acceptance of the existence of God and the freely given sacrifice of Jesus, each hearer thinks of the Christian on the seat behind him, and of the Christian on the seat in front of him, but never of the Christian who sits on the seat between the two. Christianity is a delightful creed, based upon the assumption that all men are potential criminals, who would become actively such if they were not held in check by the belief in an almighty policeman who never sleeps and who cannot be bribed—save through the properly appointed official agencies.

So I enter my protest against two things. First, against the slander that man is essentially a religious animal. He is an animal that is liable to contract religion, so liable that in the course of his racial development he has generally managed to contract it, just as he has usually contracted certain physical diseases in his passage from infancy to manhood. But I do not libel mankind by denying that all men at all times must pass through that stage of intellectual immaturity represented by belief in the supernatural. The evidence for my protest and for my belief can be found in any civilized population. A much larger body of evidence can also be found among the same population for the persistence of primitive ideas of gods and devils and spirits and a never-never land.

I reject also, as being the greatest slander of all, the teaching that is now gaining prominence in cultured Christian circles that morals can carry no authority

without the supposition—made consciously or unconsciously—of the existence of a god. That is the greatest superstition of them all. And the fact of it is now being revived by some of the cultured leaders of the Christian Church, forces one to revise one's opinion concerning the honesty of these preachers.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

NATIVE RELIGION IN WESTERN AFRICA

DR. GEOFFREY PARRINDER'S *West African Religion* (The Epworth Press, 1949) is a valuable study of Negro customs and beliefs. In a foreword to this volume Dr. Edwin Smith, a former editor of *Africa*, affirms that Parrinder has made a judicious selection by restricting his researches to the religious customs of West African blacks who are "culturally among the most advanced of the Negroes." Their gods are many, and Dr. Smith concedes that "it is quite likely that some of the gods were once men." In any event, ancestor worship is widespread throughout the entire area embraced in these studies, which cover the Ivory and Gold Coasts, Togo, Dahomey, Nigeria and Yoruba.

Our author has dwelt long and on the most friendly terms with the blacks, especially the native priests from whom he has elicited information usually withheld from the white investigator. As he himself observes: "This essay is a combination of original research together with references from the works of modern and well qualified observers. . . . I have been fortunate in particular, in obtaining first-hand observation upon the recruiting and 'convent' training of devotees, I believe to an extent not published before."

Parrinder frequently notes analogies in African cults to rites, ceremonies and assumptions recorded in the Jewish Scriptures, and surmises that the faiths of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia and, unquestionably, that of later Islam, have all influenced the current cults of West Africa. Still, none of the deities of this religion are jealous like Jahveh, and strange divinities are readily admitted into African cults. Polytheism is everywhere prevalent, but there seems a superior deity above, but also at times only equal, to other gods. To what extent these High Gods owe their existence to European influence appears an open question. As our author remarks: "There is no doubt that Christian ideas have greatly modified general religious ideas, in the coastal areas, in recent years." Indeed, one African authority maintains that a so-called monotheism in Ashanti is due to Jewish inspiration.

Yet, even where High Gods are alleged to exist, little or no attention is given them. The cult of Nyam is widespread as a sky and rain god and Parrinder considers that: "It is not impossible that the name and idea of Nyam came from the north, or have been influenced by Islamic and Semitic beliefs about God." This conclusion, he avers, seems much more probable than that African monotheism, such as it is, has arisen from Christian teaching. In addition to Sky, Rain and Thunder gods, there are deities of Smallpox, Mother Earth, and Water. The earth spirits bestow family fertility and abundant crops. Thursday is the Earth goddess's sacred day and she is sometimes regarded as the Sky god's wife. She is held in high honour, yet, as Rattray testifies, "no temple or other object is reared to her, but her power is none the less universally acknowledged."

The Smallpox god, Shokpona, is more regarded in Dahomey than any other deity, where this dread disease was only too well known.

"The priests of this cult," states Parrinder, "served the purpose of preventing the spread of smallpox, and other contagious diseases, by removing the corpse of one who died from the sickness, as well as all his belongings. The hygienic value of this may be realised when it is known that all corpses are normally buried under the floor of the huts, which are still often used as living rooms."

Prior to the introduction of vaccination, smallpox sores were opened to expel the virus and herbal remedies applied. It is claimed that the priests were proficient herbalists and successfully treated tuberculosis, leprosy and other afflictions. In truth, roots and leaves are still employed for these purposes.

Every stream and sea has its spirits, while the snake cult is widely prevalent. As Parrinder recalls: "We may remember in the Bible, the snake, tree and woman in Genesis, the brazen serpent made by Moses and to which incense was brought to the time of King Hezekiah, the woman with the spirit of python in Acts." In Africa the python is much admired for its appearance and docile disposition and, in coastal places, is worshipped. Again, the tree cults of Africa closely resemble those frequently mentioned in the Bible.

With the Negroes, adoration and worship of ancestors everywhere prevails. The dead are adored as departed heroes and are also present in the home. They provide abundance and prosperity. They venerate tradition and preserve its secrets. They resent communications concerning the past and the living dread their anger, if they recall truthfully, past events. In pious families wine is offered the invisible spirits before drinking. Some place food on the ground for them and the pots used in the evening repasts remain untouched until morning, lest the ancestors find nothing to eat during their nocturnal wanderings. Human sacrifices to the ancestral spirits have been virtually suppressed by European rulers. These sacrifices were chiefly concerned with funeral ceremonial affairs of a domestic character, while, Parrinder assures us, few were made to the major divinities. "In purely religious rites," he states, "human offerings were made for harvests and fertility; if this was not done it was thought that the rain would not fall, nor the fields bear fruit."

The newly-born child is usually regarded as the reincarnation of a deceased ancestor. Circumcision is a religious rite. Polygamy is customary and many wives change their spouses. Infant deaths are very numerous, and fertility is among the highest of virtues. "A girl," we read, "is expected to be a virgin at marriage, a white cloth is slept on the first night. . . . If it is not blood-stained the girl may be severely punished." This was the traditional custom, but where the whites predominate, it is now little regarded.

Many other aspects of religion are dealt with in this volume, which students of comparative cults will peruse with pleasure and profit.

T. F. PALMER.

Medicine touches religion not in its beliefs, but in its care for the individual soul and the way of living . . . Between these varieties there should be contact and tolerance but not compromise. The disciples of medicine are thus concerned with two different kinds of knowledge . . . To the profession of medicine belongs the narrow road of knowledge, wisdom and understanding. The magical and miraculous are the broad roads which lead to destruction.—LORD DAWSON.

THE HEART AND THE MIND

(Continued from page 75)

IF, as Mr. Rowland believes, there are two kinds of knowledge, scientific knowledge and religious knowledge—having different origins and being acquired in different ways; and that, though complementary, one kind of knowledge is dependent solely upon human effort, while the other proceeds from some higher source; it is difficult to understand why he relies so much on the former to support the latter when, if his arguments are sound, it should obviously be the other way about. He says: "It is not long ago that eminent scientists were writing confident books and articles to suggest that their investigations had shown all religious beliefs to be a form of wishful thinking. But now many of the greatest scientists—Einstein, Max Planck, and the like—are saying that the religious view of the universe and its workings is a point of view which is tenable and which may ultimately prove as satisfactory in its way as the scientific point of view has proved in the past" (*Freethinker*, December 24, 1950). In support of this contention Mr. Rowland quotes the following from Einstein:—

"The most beautiful emotion we can experience is the mystical. It is the source of all true art and science. He to whom the emotion is a stranger, who can no longer wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead."

"That, after all," says Mr. Rowland, "is a statement to which most of the religious leaders of the ages would assent." Of course, the religious leaders of the ages would assent to any statement, however vague, or however silly, that seemed to give the least support to their tottering beliefs. And, after all, to what does such a statement amount? We could find many much more to the point, and much more authoritative, in the *Civitas Dei* of St. Augustine. If there are two kinds of knowledge, a "scientific" and a "religious," surely where religion is concerned the authority of a saint should weigh heavier in the scales than that of a mere scientist, especially one whose theory of Relativity has been branded by a Catholic Cardinal as a "befogged speculation producing universal doubt about God and his creation," a theory that cloaked "a ghastly apparition of Atheism."

When Rabbi Goldstein, a Jewish American clergyman wrote to ask Einstein if he believed in God, he replied:—

"I believe in Spinoza's God, who reveals himself in the orderly harmony of what exists; not in a God who concerns himself with the fate and actions of human beings."

A God of this kind, who has no concern with anything that man does, nor with what becomes of him, is certainly of no use to anyone who is religious. As Chapman Cohen, in dealing with this question says: "What significance have all the churches, synagogues, mosques, and other gathering places of the religiously afflicted if they are worshipping a God who takes no interest in their fate or their actions, and who doesn't even condescend to know what they are praying, or singing, or talking about?" The adversities of religious leaders have certainly made them acquainted with some strange bedfellows!

Mr. Rowland next refers to Max Planck, introducing him as the "discoverer of the famous Quantum Theory, which has revolutionised physics within the last 50 years," as though Planck's qualifications under this head

automatically bestowed on him the right to speak with authority on religious matters. Mr. Rowland quotes from Planck's *A Scientific Autobiography* as follows:—

“The natural scientist recognises as immediately given nothing but the content of his sense experiences and of the measurement based on them. He starts out from this point of a road of research, to approach as best he can the supreme and eternally unattainable goal of his quest—God and His world order.”

The most charitable construction one can put on this extract is that it was written by Planck in his declining years. Can anyone imagine a person starting out to approach a supreme and eternally unattainable goal? The second sentence of the extract is undiluted nonsense and the first but underlines what Bayard Simmons, in a reply to Mr. Rowland, said in *The Freethinker* of January 21, 1951: “Scientific people have to deal with a universe of extended matter, and of force (or energy) which is activated matter. They deal with this through their material organs, the sense organs, and as scientists, *qua* scientists, they have nothing more with which to deal.”

Mr. Rowland's contention that there is a change of outlook in the world of science, and that many of the leading scientists of the day are at least sympathetic to a religious attitude to life, is hardly substantiated by the meaningless citations which he is pleased to refer to as the philosophical views of Max Planck and Einstein (*The Freethinker*, February 11, 1951). If it were true, as he says, that the scientists who still remain pure materialists are not any longer typical; that they are, in a sense, suffering from a mental hangover from a period of 50 to 100 years ago, he would have been able to provide us with more convincing evidence than he has so far done. All he has done is to quote a couple of extracts which are so scientific, or, if he prefers, philosophical, that one can attach to them any meaning he likes. From them, Mr. Rowland deduces that the changes in the intellectual climate which he is discussing are perceived by the great scientific geniuses like Planck and Einstein before they penetrate to the rank-and-file thinkers who, of course, are well below the level of Planck and Einstein. Just in the same way the ordinary man-in-the-street is below the rank-and-file thinkers and, though he may still think that science has exploded all the pretensions of religion, the changes in the intellectual climate will eventually penetrate to him. We can well imagine scientific facts being handed down in this way; but let anyone try to imagine either of the citations from Einstein and Planck undergoing a similar process.

After drawing all the support he can from “science,” and from the unscientific utterances of scientific men, and evidently still feeling himself insecure, Mr. Rowland adopts the favourite device of the religious apologist of restricting “science” to the world of weight, mass, velocity—to the world which can be measured—and of claiming as the legitimate domain of religion all that falls outside this restriction. Apparently he fails to see that this device considerably reduces the value of the testimonials which he quotes with so much gusto from “Einstein, Max Planck, and the like.” And why should the world of physics be selected as exclusively synonymous with science? The answer is that from this world at least, religion has been totally excluded. So, says the apologist, we will give up to science (as he defines it) the world of measurement and retain for ourselves the more important world of human values—goodness, truth, beauty—with which science cannot deal, and to which scientific measurements cannot apply.

Though we cannot apply a foot-rule to an emotion, or weigh an idea, and though the many sensations we experience may be difficult, and often impossible, to describe; nevertheless, our thoughts and feelings are entirely dependent on our physical structures, and there is neither justification, nor need, to assume that they spring from, some higher source.

(To be concluded)

FRANK KENYON.

A CATHOLIC BIBLE

AS everyone knows, the standard “Authorised Version” of the Bible in the Roman Catholic Church is the Vulgate, itself a Latin version made from the original Hebrew and Greek by that most learned of the Fathers of the Church, St. Jerome, at the end of the fourth century of our era. However, whilst Latin is the universal church-language of the Church of Rome, its present character as a “dead” language no longer employed in current speech, limits its use solely to the clergy. For the benefit of the unlearned laity, translations of the “sacred scriptures” into the vernacular are permitted provided—an important qualification—that they are expressly authorised by the proper authorities in the Roman Catholic Church. For Catholics, it must, of course, always be remembered that the Bible has never had either the doctrinal or the practical importance that it has for Protestant orthodoxy. For in the Catholic scheme of things the Bible derives its authority from the Church which guarantees it—and not *vice versa*, as in Protestant theology. For Rome makes her own the famous aphorism of St. Augustine of Hippo, “I would not believe in the Gospel were it not for the authority of the Church.”

In English-speaking lands, the Catholic “Authorised Version” since the end of the 16th century has been the Douai or Rheims version drawn up in those French places of exile by Catholic priests exiled from England by the Protestant government of Queen Elizabeth. For three and a-half centuries the “Douai Version” represented the only authorised Catholic version which the Faithful can read in English without censure. All Protestant translations are, of course, tainted with “heresy” and, as such, forbidden. This sweeping prohibition includes, of course, both the far more eloquent Jacobean “Authorised Version” of the Church of England—incidentally, we understand, a very inaccurate translation—and the far more scientific “Revised Version” of modern Anglicanism. For the Catholic layman unversed in Latin, it has been the Douai translation that has alone been available.

Now, however, he has the option of a second translation. For a distinguished convert to Rome, Monsignor R. A. Knox, an Oxford scholar and the son of an Anglican bishop, has now produced another authoritative translation, expressly authorised by the Roman hierarchy in this country for use on a par with the older Douai version. Mgr. Knox completed his translation direct from the Vulgate, between 1945 and 1949, when the successive volumes of his translation first appeared. The gifted translator is now said to be due shortly for a cardinal's hat, in due succession to his brilliant predecessor in Oxford, the renowned Cardinal Newman.

We may, we think, fairly add that, if so, Mgr. Knox has fairly earned his promotion. For, as and when considered purely as a literary production, the Knox translation possesses many and great merits. It is lucid,

forceful, and extremely readable. As a writer of clear vigorous English prose, Mgr. Knox must, we think, be held to rank high amongst contemporary writers. Naturally, one looks in vain here for the majestic, if somewhat long-winded eloquence which seemed to be the natural mode of speech of the Elizabethan and Jacobean divines who compiled the sonorous pages of the Anglican "Authorised Version" (1604). However, the translator cannot be blamed for that; an "Elizabethan Age," when the English language was in its splendid dawn, does not happen twice! In any case, the present version, if less impressive, is much clearer and much easier to follow. It is, indeed, intensely readable.

So much for Mgr. Knox as a man of letters and for his translation as a purely literary performance. How does it stand as a translation? We lack the technical equipment to pass judgment upon this purely scholastic question. From his numerous notes appended to the text, Mgr. Knox has evidently gone very thoroughly into his documentary sources. Probably, however, his almost exclusive dependence on the Vulgate version of St. Jerome, which is compulsory for Catholic scholars, is a source of weakness and inaccuracy. For whilst St. Jerome's Latin version was a really great feat of scholarship, his sources were often corrupt, and his resulting translations are now generally admitted by linguistic experts to have been often inaccurate or obscure; our translator, to judge from some cautious admissions in his footnotes, appears to be conscious of the handicap imposed upon him by his compulsory dependence upon the Vulgate. However, whilst Jerome's Latin translation is not canonically binding, this is a distinction without a difference as far as Catholic students of the Bible are concerned. No open criticism of the Vulgate could hope for publication under Catholic auspices. Certainly such a version could never hope to be officially authorised by Rome.

F. A. RIDLEY.

(To be concluded)

APPEASEMENT

SELDOM in our history have common words been so generally misunderstood. Take, for example, the word "appeasement."

Webster's defines "appease" as, "to make quiet; to calm; to reduce to a state of peace; to still; to pacify; to allay."

What is wrong in "appeasing" an aggressor by reducing him to a "state of peace" by force of arms? Again, what is wrong in pacifying, calming and quietening an aggressor, if it can be done with honour and justice? Did not Christ say, "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God"?

The compilers of dictionaries must think again. The word "appeasement" is far too important in the vocabulary of international politics to be left adrift on the seas of controversy. Its position must be fixed and charted if disaster is to be avoided.

In the course of the evolution of a living language words often change their meanings. It is usually a slow process, but the word "appeasement" is a striking exception. Here we have a mutation dating from the historic mission to Munich of the late Mr. Neville Chamberlain. It is not for us to judge what were the motives of Mr. Chamberlain, except to admit that there was a case for his sincerity, but from that time the word and insult, and submission to the demands and encroachments of an incorrigibly untrustworthy schemer, who

grows more menacing through concessions. The would-be appeaser in our midst is therefore regarded as a danger to the State or, at best, as a stupid and unpractical simpleton. He is a man whose opinions are not worth a moment's consideration. He has got a bee in his bonnet.

Until its meaning has been clearly re-defined the word "appeasement" should be avoided like the very devil by those wishing to advance the cause of peace. It has now grown to mean, to excuse aggression, to incite to violence, to bolster up to a condition of military invincibility, to open the floodgates of anarchy. Mr. Neville Chamberlain will certainly be remembered by the philologists of the future, if not by the democracies.

"Peace" is another word which lends itself to endless discussion and differing interpretations. Peace through strength is almost universally acclaimed as a revolutionary doctrine. The other fellow replies in kind, but supports enthusiastic gatherings of pacifists, provided that they do not frame their resolutions with too embarrassing an impartiality.

The whole world is frantically arming in order to preserve peace. The poor dove is not allowed time to go behind the scenes to moult. It must be admitted that if war does break out it will end some time in peace, even if it is the peace of the grave. So perhaps the policy makers of the opposing blocs are taking the long view?

"S.A."

RAM IN A THICKET

Human nature ever seeks a scapegoat.
God the Father looked for one
And found it, in his Son.

How many fathers sacrifice their sons.
Abraham heard his Lord's cry:
"Behold, make thy son die."

Isaac, thine only, most-beloved son,
Burn him, sacrificed to me,
On a hill thou shalt see."

The angel of the Lord then intervened,
"Abraham, hold back thy knife
And spare the young man's life."

Frustration in God's bosom then was born;
Scapegoat for created sin
Not found—chaos within.

Nineteen hundred and five years later on
He nailed his Son to a cross:
Relief out-balanced loss.

This scapegoat-seeking god with feet of clay
Has many imitators;
To love and growth traitors.

—BAYARD SIMMONS.

In the Bombay weekly *The Radical Humanist* of December 10, 1950, occur these pertinent words: "Man's struggle for freedom is endless but he has to continue his march on the path of freedom. The crisis of our time has imperilled the very possibility of that march, freedom itself is threatened. The adoption of the charter is a reminder to mankind that freedom is very precious and that it has to be preserved. The threat to freedom has arisen only because Man has been losing confidence in himself, because a large number of people suffer from the fear of freedom. The will to freedom must be developed and such will can grow only on the basis of Reason. Rationalism is the foundation of the philosophy of freedom. Reason must begin to govern the affairs of man."

ACID DROPS

A "mission" recently took place at Leeds University, the object being the winning of the "souls" of the students for Christ. Here is a specimen prayer—it deserves to be saved for its complete imbecility—"My God, my heart is set on serving thee. Here would I consecrate to thee and thy cause each faculty and power . . . Take all and use it for thy holy purpose. Use me to glorify thee." The report from which this is taken does not say how many converts have been made either from born Christians or from unbelievers; but if the above "prayer" has converted one of the latter, our movement is well rid of a lunatic.

The havoc caused in New Guinea by the eruption of Mt. Lavington will never be quoted, we are sure, as a perfect example of the Design Argument, or even as a proof that whatever God does, "he doeth well." Both the mission stations at Sangara and Higaturu received the "worst blast" when the mountain burst into flame. The staff at Sangara, the Rev. D. J. Taylor, his wife and four children and Miss de Bibra all perished, and not only other mission stations were completely razed but hundreds of poor natives were burnt to death and their homes wiped out. Possibly some very earnest Christian will cite the eruption as an example of God's wrath at the blatant materialism which is sweeping over Europe. After all, some excuse must be found for God Almighty!

Although the British Army everywhere must have its contingents of chaplains as by law established, there is little else but moaning from the powers that be that our soldiers, as the Bishop of Croydon recently wrote in the *Church Times*, are "becalmed on a sea of ignorance." This is the case with our troops in Germany who, while not exactly hostile to the Church, are "merely apathetic." Of course, if during the Padre's Hour the case for the Church is put to them "intelligently" (can it be?) we are told "they are prepared to listen." We are naturally not told that if they didn't listen, it might mean horrid fatigues all the way.

The Bishop proudly declares that he himself has been privileged to confirm many hundreds of National Servicemen in Germany—but (there is always a "but") the "tragedy is that they tend to fail to become regular communicants." And this is the case also in England. Attendance at church fell considerably when church parades were abolished, but we are assured that 96 per cent. of officers want them back. Of course. Our officers from Field Marshals to corporals appear to be so devoted to Christ that it is a perpetual wonder that they don't fight with a humble Crucifix instead of a Bren gun. In any case, the one word hated in the army is "Freedom." It must always be either "orders" or "compulsion."

We have often wondered how the picture of "gentle Jesus," so often insisted upon by his followers, could be reconciled with the curses he appears to have heaped upon everybody who disagreed with him. The explanation is easy. When Jesus cursed, you were getting a picture of "the authentic wrath of God Almighty," the kind of wrath he is pouring into the world now because of the advance of blatant materialism. As the *Church Times* puts it, "The wrath of God overhangs the world to-day because men have forgotten the

purpose of their creation." And what is that purpose? Repent, repent, repent. And if you don't—God help you!

Staggered no doubt at the success of the Christian Evidence Society in Hyde Park, the Archbishop of Canterbury is going to emulate that divine and august body there on May 19th. It is going to be arranged by the Festival Committee of the British Council of Churches. Four processions will enter the main gates and they hope to bring in 12,000 people. In addition to Dr. Fisher, the Bishop of London, the Chief Moderator and Dr. D. Soper, and many robed choirs and massed bands will all take part, and no doubt some heart-rending queries will be put to the Lord if the rally fails to be a success. What about a hint as to one practical object—say, bringing Stalin to his knees?

As the result of a publicity campaign, Roman Catholics are very proud that they "converted" 45 people in Carlisle the other week. They were all, of course, Christians in the first place, but it was a notable victory. It appears also that 30 other "non-Catholics" were "favourably disposed"—again all Christians. What the Catholic journals who chortle with joy at these remarkable victories rarely point out is that, while a non-Christian or two may get converted, it is a fact that numbers of Roman Catholics go over to Freethought every year. They are classed as "leakages" it is true, but as little as possible is said about them. And in almost every case, once a Freethinker, always a Freethinker.

What are "facts"? We ask the question because the Rev. H. Cook, in the *Christian World*, while admitting that facts are necessary, does not like the way "the Rationalist wants to pick his facts." We do not take enough consideration, he claims, of "spiritual" facts. Mr. Cook is good enough to admit that some "spiritual" facts like the Assumption of Mary are not true—but, but . . . "the closer we keep to New Testament reality the more soundly based our faith will be," he blandly tells us. One of the New Testament facts is the story of Jesus being carried around by the Devil, a story which, of course, Mr. Cook believes in all its details. But is it really a "fact"?

Freemasonry is now in the news following the fact that the Archbishop of Canterbury is a Freemason, and it is the subject of a bitter attack by the Rev. W. Hannah in *Theology*. He claims that it is based on pre-Christian pagan rites and "mysteries" and quotes the penalty of revealing its secrets—" . . . having his tongue torn out by the root, his throat cut across and his body buried in the tidal sands of the sea." Both Rome and the Methodists have condemned Freemasonry—so what about it, Archbishop?

The American "Humanist" reveals God's mysterious ways as set out by Monsignor Greene in St. Patrick's Cathedral, New York, some short time ago—"death in battle is part of God's plan for populating the Kingdom of Heaven." This must be most consoling to the parents of soldiers. Anyhow the Romanists have no monopoly of the mystery since the Heuristic Dianetics of Los Angeles suffer from norms, which make them slightly *anaten* and so they receive new norms and in "rapidly descending spirals they decay." No wonder the Chinese invaded Korea!

"THE FREETHINKER"

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

TO CORRESPONDENTS

P.S. NEWELL.—We give our contributors a free hand, but we shall bear your suggestions in mind. A detailed study of such a work as Massey's *Natural Genesis* means, all the same, very hard work.

W. E. NICHOLSON.—Many thanks for cutting. Reference to it, however, would again bring in shoals of "apologists."

Will correspondents kindly note to address all communications in connection with "The Freethinker" to: "The Editor," and not to any particular person. Of course, private communications can be sent to any contributor.

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 FRIEDENKER (Switzerland), DON BASILIO (Italy).

When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, giving as long notice as possible.

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.

Lecture Notices should reach the Office by Friday morning.

Correspondents are requested to write on one side of the paper only and to make their letters as brief as possible.

SUGAR PLUMS

London and District readers can book Thursday evening, March 15, for attendance at the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C. 1, where a Freethought Demonstration is being arranged by the Executive of the N.S.S. The speakers will be Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner, M.A., President of the World Union of Freethinkers, Mr. L. Ebury, Vice-President N.S.S., Mr. F. A. Ridley, and Mr. J. W. Barker; with Mr. R. H. Rosetti in the chair. Questions will be invited. The proceedings begin at 7 p.m., and admission is free. How many sympathisers and Christian friends can you bring?

On Friday, March 9, the second reading of a private member's Bill to permit divorce by either party after seven, or more, years separation, will be moved in the House of Commons. The Marriage Law Reform Society have prepared an explanatory note on the Bill, and a leaflet on how you can help in the matter. Copies of both may be had from the N.S.S. offices, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1, or by post, one penny.

Merseyside readers can hear Mr. F. A. Ridley this evening (March 4) in Cooper's Hall, 12, Short Street, Liverpool 6, when he lectures for the local N.S.S. Branch on "Foundations of Christianity," at 7 p.m. Mr. Ridley's lectures are always full of useful information on the subject he is dealing with, and those who have heard him before will need no pressing to be present.

At the South London Branch, N.S.S., to-day (March 4) at 7-15 p.m., Mr. H. Cutner is lecturing on "Sex Worship." The subject deals with one side of religion not generally known and should prove interesting and

instructive. The S.L.B. meets at the London and Brighton Hotel, 139, Queen's Road, Peckham, S.E. 15.

On the Air is the title of the journal of the Listeners' Association which aims, it is understood, to secure in broadcasting fair treatment for minority expression of debatable opinions. This is an aim for which we can have nothing but praise, but we note with interest that the guest of honour at the annual dinner on January 16 was Sir Waldron Smithers, and that Mr. Gillie Potter was also a speaker. As far as can be judged from the four pages of the journal the real aim of the Listeners' Association is to protest against the expression of minority opinion on the radio and to ask for more Gillie Potter. Mr. Fred Hoyle, it declares, should never have been allowed to broadcast his objection to immortality as envisaged by Christians, nor were the objective statements in the "Soviet View" series allowable. Such things may exist, but should not be referred to in the hearing of British ears. Nor should British eyes be contaminated by the picture of Tito on the front page of the *Radio Times*.

We are pleased to note Mr. T. M. Mosley's vigorous correspondence in the pages of the *Nottingham Journal* where he has been dealing with the Rev. J. T. Hughes on Theism. Mr. Mosley's replies prove how well he knows the case for Freethought. We must also congratulate the Editor of the *Nottingham Journal*—it is not too often that our provincial Press is so free from any spirit of bigotry.

ON SPIRITUALISM AGAIN

READERS will remember a sharp rebuke we gave to the Spiritualist journal, *Two Worlds*, for citing some statements made by Mr. John Rowland as representing a changed attitude on the part of *The Freethinker* towards Materialism. In the number dated February 17, the Editor devotes nearly two columns in reply, charging us with being "moribund," if not already dead, and complaining that our criticism of Spiritualism is "unfounded and infantile"; and also that "week after week, (we) reveal a very narrow outlook and a complete lack of understanding of the perils which the materialistic view of life has brought to the world."

Those of us who have read Christian literature for many years, who have waded through hundreds of "tracts," and who have listened to thousands of sermons, know this kind of criticism very well indeed. If Mr. Ernest Thompson, the Editor of *Two Worlds*, was conversant with the Christian attack on Thomas Paine after *The Age of Reason* was published, or if he had the least inkling of the attacks made by devout Christians on Bradlaugh and Ingersoll, he would have recognised in them almost a word for word replica of what he says about *The Freethinker* and Materialism.

All the dreadful evils that beset the world 150 years ago were due to *The Age of Reason*, and all the drunkenness, prostitution, suicides, murders, and child and animal cruelty in their day were due to the anti-Christian propaganda of Bradlaugh and Ingersoll. In addition, their Atheism, Secularism and Materialism were "undoubtedly moribund." As Mr. Shaw Desmond said many years ago in his debate with Mr. Chapman Cohen, "Materialism was fighting in the last ditch," and somehow or other we are still fighting in the last ditch. And quite possibly, we shall be fighting in the same old ditch in another 100 years.

The fact is that Mr. Thompson hasn't the ghost of an idea what is Freethought. He appears never to have even tried to find out. Let me tell him, therefore, that the principles we have stood for have transformed religion to such a degree that it is no longer a question of proving, let us say, the existence of God, or the truth of the Bible, or whether there is a "spiritual reality"—the question is, how did people ever come to believe in these things; what sort of circumstances or environment was it that made people imagine there was a God, or that the miraculous stories in the Bible were true, or that the words "spiritual reality" have any meaning?

That there are scientists who still believe in "something" I am bound to admit—but there have been these freaks always, at all times. There have been scientists like Sir William Crookes who have been so outrageously bamboozled by fraudulent mediums that it is impossible to read their adventures in "spiritland" without roaring with laughter. Even those of their fellow scientists who were firm believers in the Bible were obliged to laugh at the credulity and superstition shown by Crookes; Alfred Russel Wallace, Lodge, and many other scientists, undoubtedly great in their own field but completely silly as soon as they ventured away from their special work.

As for our criticism of the kind of Spiritualistic claims made every week in *Two Worlds*, I can only say that I am aghast as I read, week after week, its exhibition of utter credulity. The miraculous cures in the Bible are nothing compared with the reports of the way "healers" cure the most complicated and dreadful diseases with the turn of a hand, so to speak. Moreover, *Two Worlds* is constantly resurrecting almost forgotten Spiritualists of the past—Slade, Duguid, Morse, and others—about as big a bunch of crooks as one could meet anywhere, as if they had been unsullied angels. In the number before me, we are actually told of the "transportation" of Mrs. Guppy as "one of the best corroborated cases on record." I doubt whether in the whole history of Spiritualism a bigger fraud was ever perpetrated; and I can hardly believe that even those scientists who are now "at least sympathetic to a religious attitude to life" will cite this case as one which compelled them to renounce Materialism.

It appears that about 80 years ago, Mrs. Guppy (if I remember aright, she weighed 20 stones) "was bodily carried by spirit power from her home in Highbury to Lambs Conduit St., a distance of three miles." She fell through the ceiling of the house in the latter street without leaving a trace, and was plumped on to a table round which were sitters waiting for something like this to happen. Anybody who can believe a story like that will believe anything.

Week after week, this kind of thing appears in *Two Worlds* and is no doubt believed in by the devout; and our criticism of similar twaddle is called "unfounded and infantile." Is there a single professor of science, especially any who are "sympathetic" to religion (as Mr. Rowland would say) who will vouch for this Guppy tripe? Does Mr. Rowland himself believe it?

As for Materialism, Science (as distinct from scientists) working on physics, anthropology, etc., has never found any trace of a God Almighty. If the story of Evolution is true, and this world of ours was once a mass of gaseous vapour without what we call life—and life in the course of ages was evolved, then Materialism is not only true but unassailable. With very few exceptions, there is not a scientist in the world who now denies Evolution; and every Evolutionist must be, if he is logical, a Materialist.

Only by juggling with words can he claim to be something else.

In proof of this, look at the way in which Spiritualists and Christians received the lectures broadcasted by Mr. Fred Hoyle last year—lectures in which God Almighty, Summerland and Spirit Guides were completely ignored. Were these lectures not bang up-to-date? Were they not the considered opinions of a young scientist working from the latest data?

Far from the ideas propagated about religion by *The Freethinker* being "moribund," its writers have always followed the developments of Science with the greatest keenness, and these have always confirmed the position taken by this journal in their broadest details. Will *Two Worlds*, or any Spiritualist, quote for us where Science confirms the existence of "Summerland" or the "Etherial Universe" or whatever it is called, together with a complete acceptance of Spirit Guides such as "Running Water," or "Rocky Glen," or "Katie King"? Will Mr. Thompson give us the proof from Science that people do not really die—they merely pass over, and live again in houses, smoke cigars, drink whisky, and make clothes from the air?

These columns are open to him if he can produce the proof, but it must be the unassailable conclusions of Science.

H. CUTNER.

THE ABSURDITY OF CATHOLIC DOGMA

CONCERNING J. H. G. Buller's assertion of "general obscurity" about Catholic logic and dogma, perhaps absurdity is a better word than "stupidity." Ridley says the Church is logical but Buller, in his second article in reply to my "Miracle of the Assumption," gives examples of logical inconsistency. But it becomes more absurd in his elaboration and conclusion that the dogma "merely confirmed an already established article of faith." As if this justified Ridley's assertion that the Vatican claims to know. It shows confusion, not only about faith and knowledge, but also over doctrine and dogma. It is absurd to argue illogicality in one's opponent's case if one's own is equally illogical.

If it is true that the dogma only confirms established belief, then the believer must now believe what he already believes, and the Catholic is now threatened with hell-fire if he does not believe what he does believe. It is also absurd to say the Church is dogmatic if the belief is prior to the dogma, given as confirmation. In face of such logical inconsistency; and of the modern craze for dialectic; the Catholic can not only accept or even assert absurdity, and say he believes because he does not know, but even say with Tertullian I believe because it is impossible. The absurdity arises in that, not only is dogma consequent upon beliefs, but arises in controversy over contrary beliefs or doctrines, thus involving contradiction.

Arising in controversy, all dogmas are either plainly self-contradictory, as with the Trinity, One in Three and Three in One, or else they are framed in undefined or indefinable terms, as with Papal infallibility in faith and morals. So it is absurd to speak of dogmas as "defining the faith." Dogmas are not clearly defined statements, they give the utmost latitude for the believer, and this is characteristic. Christians agree in using the word Christian but no one is sure what is meant by the term. They all say they believe in Jesus Christ but what they believe about Jesus is another question.

So, no one has any idea just what the Church teaches or what it means by what it says.

Like the terror of eternal damnation, the history of Christianity, as Buller says, is truly horrible; but so is modern warfare, and the atom bomb, in an atmosphere of secrecy and a sense of the marvellous, was hailed as a modern miracle. The power and authority of dogma is also mysterious and miraculous; as Prof. Whitehead says of scientific terms; in elucidation they become meaningless, giving the emotion of wonder. Concern about a God who created a world at some remote period, or whether this God gave some special knowledge to the Church in some equally dim past, does not touch the emotion of the sense of the miraculous. Our feelings, hopes and fears, are as intimate and personal as the faith and morals of the Church in concern for "worldliness" here and now.

I again agree when Buller makes it a matter of *ecclesia discens* and *ecclesia docens* but again suggest that he goes deeper. His approach is deductive, not inductive. He does not discern the meaning of these terms and thinks only of doctrine, thus exemplifying the old tag *docendo discimus*, we learn by teaching. He is right in connecting them with tradition, but they refer to different aspects. As *discens* refers to traditional discipline and *docens* calls for docile fidelity in acceptance of doctrine so that the disciple discerns through discipline what is customary in the *ecclesia*, it concerns the method of teaching as well as that which is taught. It involves the relations between the teacher and the disciple.

To think only of doctrine is to lose sight of the practical aspect. The development of discipline is as interesting as that of doctrine. It includes ritual and ceremonial, with hymn and prayer; and not only the relation of priesthood to laity, but also that of the religious to the secular orders. Whereas the early monks or hermits tried to escape from the "world," each successive new order, such as the Benedictine, Dominican and Franciscan, came with a revolt against the "worldliness" within the Church, and was instrumental in the "re-birth" of the Church. And as the history of Christianity is inseparable from that of monasticism, the change in discipline in the various orders has an important bearing on that within the Church.

From the solitude of the early monks, each successive new order, with change in discipline, was less confined within its cells and more active in the outside world, as preachers or friars, until the last of the orders, the Society of Jesus, was entirely active in the world at large. Early monastic mysticism was ascetic, with abstinence from food and sex, and physical pain, but the discipline became less physical, to become entirely psychological in Loyola's "spiritual exercises"; and becomes in the outside world, casuistical educational training, expanded in the College of Propaganda. The personal mysticism of St. Augustine was developed in the doctrinal logic of St. Thomas Aquinas and the discipline becomes a practical psychology in the mysticism of St. Ignatius Loyola.

To the Jesuit, faith does not only mean doctrine or even docile fidelity, but with appeal to moral sympathy and personal conviction fidelity is cultivated into enthusiasm or passionate zeal. Jesuit educational training is not simply a matter of instruction or indoctrination; it is not a matter of a curriculum of subjects for instruction; the pupil himself is the subject for education or training. With the study of conscience

known as casuistry, the inhibition and auto-suggestion of the spiritual exercises, the method of the Jesuits is intimately and passionately personal. And the subtlety of personal appeal in propaganda is an effective psychology in an established discipline of age old pre-conceptions and prejudices.

As Chapman Cohen would say, an elephant is not more marvellous than a flea, it is only bigger. The miracle of the Assumption is not more wonderful than the equally miraculous power of Authority. And if belief is prior to dogma then the dynamic power arises in the equally miraculous "faith." Given faith the rest follows logically. Instead of arguing illogicality we should consider the logic of "the Faith," which not only involves the "assumption" of motive in the outmoded psychology of logic or reason, but also the *modus operandi* of the more modern ideas of sublimation and rationalisation.

H. H. PREECE.

THE MARCH OF FREETHOUGHT

SOME of our readers and some members of the N.S.S. seem prone to take up the cry that the movement is not making progress as it did, according to some, in the past. Their call is for spectacular achievements, in a field where the spectacular means little in comparison with the steady and often unnoticed advance that goes on all the time while the small band of active Freethinkers keeps up its efforts.

They point to sparsely attended meetings and the relatively few Freethinkers who take the trouble to join their national organisation as evidence of the lack of constructive endeavour in the movement, or, if its existence is admitted, of its futility. Nevertheless, signs are never wanting to those who can and will see them that the work goes on and that it continues to bear fruit. The following is an example.

In the autumn, a letter arrived at the offices of the N.S.S. saying that the 1st Headstone Rover Crew was "anxious to obtain a speaker who could put the point of view of the Freethinker." The writer went on to say: "The majority of the crew are members of the Church of England, and the object of the series of talks we are holding throughout the winter is to give them a greater understanding of the various shades of religious thought."

Arising from this, I went to Harrow last month and introduced Freethought to a small audience of these young men, who are seniors in the local Boy Scout Movement. The talk and the subsequent discussion went on for two and a-half hours, and only the necessity for my getting a train back into London that night finally brought them to an end. Two days later I received a letter containing the following: "I would like to put on record the very sincere thanks of the crew for your talk. I doubt if you will have made any 'converts,' but you will have given food for serious thought. Anything that can stimulate serious thought in these troubled times is of inestimable value."

This, I am afraid, will not satisfy the critics of the N.S.S. They want to see us packing local town halls and bringing hordes of converts to the platform, like a Christian revivalist service. Nevertheless the experience has given me considerable satisfaction, not because I have had an opportunity to air my views, but because it represents a great (and I use the word advisedly) advance on the position obtaining only a short time ago.

The leader of the group told me that "of course, we take any difficulties we find as a result of our discussion to the Vicar," a remark indicating that they are largely dominated by religious authority; but the fact that a discussion with a Freethinker has taken place at all shows that this domination has weakened, as it will weaken in other such groups where possibly "the Vicar" now vetos any excursions into "dangerous" realms of thought. Whether converts have been made or not, the seed has been sown, and the seeds of Freethought have the quality of living and growing in soil riddled with pests and poisons that previously have kept it barren.

I am encouraged by this experience, because it gives me the hope of doing more for the movement than I have been able to do hitherto. I see the possibility of visiting other bodies of students, youth clubs, discussion groups and the like, and putting the Freethought case to them. I welcome the greater readiness of such bodies to put on such discussions, because it appears to rid me of a disability I have suffered under in comparison with our Cohens, Rosettis, Eburys, Brightons, and the many others like them. I once got on to a platform in Hyde Park and, despite the fact that I was listened to without interruption by a small audience and received a faint round of applause on getting down, spent a very uncomfortable ten or twelve minutes on that eminence. No doubt many members of N.S.S. branches share my sense of inability to work for the cause as an open-air speaker, but feel able to put our case in the more intimate atmosphere of the clubroom or local hall.

It seems to me that they would be doing better service by seeking out opportunities of doing this than by joining in the chorus of "dismal Jimmies" who bewail public apathy and attack the sincerity and ability of our Executive, of whose number I happen to be one of the less active minority, who nevertheless do what they can when the chance arises.

P. VICTOR MORRIS.

SCIENCE, RELIGION AND MORALS

SOME BOOKS RECOMMENDED

[Interested readers in Mr. Meads' articles may find the following list of great interest.—ED.]

I. COMPARATIVE RELIGION

Comparative Religion, by A. C. Bouquet. Pelican Book No. 89, published 1950, 2s. 6d. (see long list at end of this book).

The Paganism in our Christianity, by Arthur Weigall (Hutchinson N/D, 3s. 6d.). An excellent and easy-to-read summary by a first-class Egyptologist.

Pagan Christs, by John M. Robertson (Watts, 1903). Good, detailed, erudite.

Religious Systems of the World (Swan Sonnenschein, 1905). A symposium.

Religion, by Nathaniel Michlem (Home University Library, 1948, 5s.). Good Summary.

II. CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALS

Christianity, by Edwyn Bevan (Home University Library, 1933).

III. CHRISTIAN HISTORY

A Short History of Christianity, by John M. Robertson (Watts & Co., Thinker's Library).

A Short History of Christianity, by Solomon Reinach (Heineman, 1922).

The Evolution of Christianity, by L. Gordon Rylands (Watts, 1927). Gnostic development.

The Origins of Christianity, by Thomas Whittaker (Watts, 1904). Early history.

IV. THEOPNEUSTIC AUTHORITY

V. THE BIBLE

Encyclopedia Biblica (A. & C. Black). A store-house of information for all sections.

Bible Myths, by T. W. Doane (Truth Seeker Co., New York, 1882). Very comprehensive.

Synoptic Gospels, by E. Basil Redlich. Students' book on text.

VI. HISTORICAL JESUS

Jesus, by Charles Guignebert (Kegan Paul, 1935, 25s.). Most important, excellent.

The Rise of Christianity, by (Bishop) E. W. Barnes (Longmans Green, 1947, 15s.). Extraordinary.

The Psychic Stream, by Arthur Findlay (Psychic Press). Good, detailed, spiritualistic.

Life of Jesus, by Ernest Ronan (Watts, Thinker's Library). Well known, but unreliable.

The Historical Jesus, by John M. Robertson (Watts, 1916). Controversial.

The Resurrection Doctrine, by Jocelyn Rhys (Watts, 1924, 7s. 6d.). Good, easy reading.

VII. METAPHYSICAL CHRIST.

The Creation of Christ, by P. L. Couchoud (Watts, 2 vols., 25s.). Good, early history.

The Christ Myth, by Arthur Drews (Unwin).

The Christ of the Gospels, by P. Gardner-Smith (Heffer-Cambridge, 1938, 8s. 6d.).

VIII. CHRISTIAN MIRACLES

Supernatural Religion, by Walter R. Cassels (Watts, 1902). Detailed, erudite, still famous.

IX. THE ATONEMENT

Christian Theology, by Rev. Arthur C. Headlam (Oxford, 1934). History and doctrine.

Constantine and His Age.

X. CHRISTIAN DIVERSITIES

A Martian Examines Christianity, by Arthur Levett (Watts, 1934, 1s.). Popular, conversational.

XI. CHRISTIAN FAITH

Faith and its Psychology, by (Dean) W. R. Inge (Duckworth's Theological Library). Excellent.

XII. HUMAN IMMORTALITY

The Illusion of Immortality, by Corliss Lamont (Watts, 1936, 8s. 6d.). Excellent summary.

The Christian Hope of Immortality, by A. E. Taylor (Centenary Press, 1938, 3s. 6d.). Christian statement.

Christianity and the Future Life, by Guy Kendall (Thomas Murby, 1938, 1s. 6d.). Good summary.

GENERAL

Christian Thought to the Reformation, by H. B. Workman (Duckworth's Theological Library, 7s. 6d.).

History of Christian Thought Since Kant, by E. Caldwell Moore (Duckworth's Theological Library, 7s. 6d.).

The Origin and Evolution of the Christian Church, by T. G. Jalland (Hutchinson's University Library).

The Creed of a Christian, by Nathaniel Michlem (Student Christian Movement, 1940).

The Practical Basis of Christian Belief, by Percy Gardner (Williams and Norgate, 1923, 12s. 6d.).

W. EDWARD MEADS.

CORRESPONDENCE

THE ARMY

SIR,—Re "Civilization and Atomania," by W. Collins, in "Correspondence." Will Mr. Collins please note. About (as he says) "All people desire peace, the exceptors being armament contractors and professional soldiers." Now, though I cannot answer for all professional soldiers, I would like to point out that just because a person happens to be a professional soldier that doesn't necessarily mean that they don't desire peace. I am an ex-regular, and I was just as much in favour of peace as anybody else, because I knew that if there was a war I should probably have to live in a dirty old field instead of the comparative comfort of a barrack room. See? Just because I was a soldier that doesn't mean I wanted a war. I don't like that. Mr. Collins should know that whether there is war or peace, there is always a standing army, or regular army, or whatever you like to call it, and people join it, as it is one way of earning a living.

After my time was up, I was tired of it and decided not to re-engage. Exactly why I was tired of it is another story, but the long and short of what I want to say here is: *Mr. Collins is grossly unfair to the regular army, and I'll bet many others would share my view.*

I should be gratified if you would print this at your earliest convenience.—Yours, etc.,

A. HANCOCK.

AN APPRECIATION

SIR,—No doubt you will already have learned of the death, in Bradford, of Mr. R. J. H. Day, M.P.S., variously and affectionately known as "Reggy," "The Old Villain," and "Old Soc."

Though he was never a member of the N.S.S., he was, nevertheless, an ardent freethinker. His voice will be sadly missed here in Bradford. His intellectual attitude was an inspiration to the young, indeed among the group it earned him the affectionate nickname of "Old Soc."—a nickname he highly valued. His inspiration was Socrates, along with Thalia, "The Goddess One Should Not Deny."

Personally, I consider it a great honour to have had the privilege afforded me of sitting at his feet. No words of mine can express my profound sorrow at the news of his death.

To his widow, held in equal esteem, I can only extend my deepest sympathy.—Yours, etc.,

VERNON CARTER.

OBITUARY

CHARLES GEORGE QUINTON

It is with deep sorrow that we announce the sudden death of Charles George Quinton, husband of Mrs. M. Quinton a member of the N.S.S. Executive and a Trustee of the Society, which occurred on February 16 in his 62nd year. The son of parents who gave of their best to the old Bethnal Green Branch, he was a member of the Parent Society of the N.S.S. up till the time of his death. Quiet and retiring by nature, which hid his real character, never seeking publicity, he was always thorough in his Freethought and never hesitated to meet opposing views.

He will be remembered by the older members of the West Ham Branch N.S.S. as a gifted violinist in the string band, all Freethinkers, which contributed musical items at the Branches' Sunday evening lectures, and for his generous and willing help in any capacity at its socials. His married life was a happy one in which mutual affection, trust and service never waned, and our sincere sympathy is with the widow in her great loss. Cremation took place on February 22 at The City of London Crematorium, Manor Park, London, E., where before an assembly of relatives and friends, which included Mr. and Mrs. Chapman Cohen and representatives of the West Ham Branch N.S.S., a Secular Service was read by R. H. Rosetti.

REGINALD JOHN DAY

Intellectual circles in Bradford, and freethinking in particular, have suffered a serious loss in the passing of "Reggie" Day, at the age of a little over seventy.

By training and avocation a chemist, and by inclination a serious student of philosophy, his wide reading, his great good humour and ready wit, made him well known as a brilliant debater.

While his convictions, which seemed to hover between agnosticism and a trace of vitalism, would not allow him to join the National Secular Society, for the last twenty years he rarely missed a Branch lecture, indoor or outdoor, and often spoke in appreciation of our activities. He gave the movement a great deal of active help in speaking from our platform, taking part in debates, brains trusts, etc., his contributions always containing much that was wise and useful.

Tolerant and generous towards others, he often treated us to a little gentle leg-pulling and sometimes to a little serious tail twisting, and we loved him the better for it.

We paid our last respects to him on February 16 when a large gathering, including the President, Treasurer, and Secretary of the Bradford Branch, attended at the Crematorium to take part in a service conducted by the Reverend Dudley Richards, Unitarian Pastor, an old and very much respected mutual friend.

W. B.

AMY BATT

On February 15 Mrs. Amy Batt, wife of Walter Batt, was cremated at the Manchester Crematorium. Both Mrs. Batt and her husband have been for more than fifty years faithful adherents to the freethought cause.

Old members may remember that November, 1906, saw Mr. and Mrs. Batt's first daughter named by the ex-Rev. J. T. Lloyd at the Secular Hall, Rusholme Road.

Mrs. Margaret McCall kindly gave an inspired address at the Crematorium and was very much appreciated by the family, who felt it had helped them in their sad loss.

Mr. Batt well remembers the old giants of the past in the movement—G. W. Foote, Joseph Symes, J. M. Robertson, Chapman Cohen, J. McCabe, and of course, as mentioned, J. T. Lloyd.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

OUTDOOR

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (St. Mary's Gate, Blitzed Site).—Lunch-hour Lectures every weekday, 1 p.m.: Mr. G. WOODCOCK.

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

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

INDOOR

Blackpool Branch N.S.S. (Jenkinson's Cafe, Talbot Square).—Thursday, March 8, 7-30 p.m.: J. G. BURDON, "Godlessness, Curse or Blessing."

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute, Science Room).—Sunday, 6-45 p.m.: W. G. K. FORD, M.Sc., "Straight Thinking."

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Tuesday, March 6, 7 p.m.: F. STEFANI, "Rationalism's Blind Spot."

Glasgow Secular Society (Branch of the N.S.S.) (McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: W. G. DRURY, Mrs. SYLVIA BASSAM, "Focus on Nudism."

Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: 70th Anniversary. C. BRADLAUGH BONNER and Musical items.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Cooper's Hall, 12, Shaw Street, Liverpool, 6).—Sunday, March 4, 7 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY, "The Foundations of Christianity."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: HAROLD FISHER, "British Trade Unionism and Socialist Practice."

South London Branch N.S.S. (The London and Brighton Hotel, 139, Queen's Road, Peckham, S.E.15).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: H. CUTNER (N.S.S.), "Sex Worship."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON, M.A., "Man and Society—A False Antithesis."

West London Branch N.S.S. (The "Laurie Arms," Crawford Place, Edgware Road, Marylebone, W. 1).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: BONAR THOMPSON, A Lecture.

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