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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Deceit and Evolution

A NORTH-COUNTRY reader of *The Freethinker* sends me an interesting problem in psychological ethics, with a request that I would attempt its solution. He has been looking round, and has discovered that, between actual facts and many of our copy-book moralities there is a wide divergence. Liars often prosper, dishonest men make their way in the world, self-advertising and egotistical persons are taken at their own valuation, the wicked flourish like a green bay-tree. In particular, he notes the part played in life by deceit. He points out that in the plant world plants deceive insects by their markings or colours, and owe their life to the deception. Animals illustrate the same principle, and savage man captures animals by a number of deceitful methods. With advancing civilisation he sees greater opportunities for deceit in warfare, in social and in business life, and those who practice deceit often survive, while those who do not as often go under. And so my correspondent concludes that in the evolution of the race deceit has a certain value, and it would seem as though—deceit being an exercise of the intelligence—that races survive as they practice deceit in a more or less successful manner. A conclusion not quite in accord with our copy-books.

Well, what is the meaning of it all? Is it, as my correspondent thinks, that the struggle for existence places so much emphasis on the principle of deceit that its expression becomes a sign of increased development? From one point of view, a plausible case might be made out for this position. Putting on one side the unconscious deception involved in animal markings and colouration, it must be admitted that the deceptions practised by man on the animal world are at least an expression of superior intelligence. So, also, if we take warfare under either savage or civilised conditions. We have feints and ambushes, ships and guns coloured and men dressed so as to deceive the eye, and the circulation of misleading intelligence to deceive the enemy. Here we have two rival bodies of men playing a game, the rules of which are understood by both, and, other things being equal, a superiority at the game is evidenced by the winner. In commerce, the rule of selling dear and buying cheap means, in practice, deluding the seller into the belief that the market is not so favourable as is actually the case, or persuading the buyer that the article for sale is better or of greater value than it really is. The wheels of social intercourse, it might also be argued, are lubricated by a number of petty deceptions. We pretend we are pleased or grieved when we are neither one nor the other. We hide our anger or conceal our opinions, and practice a hundred-and-one petty tricks by means of which social life runs more agreeably.

Now the first comment one has to make upon all these facts is that, despite them, the essential basis of all social life is mutual reliability and the confidence in one

another that only proved reliability can breed. This is so obvious that I need not labour the point. It is true that with the development of society the number of deceptions increase, and that these are all expressions of intelligence. A little over four centuries ago, people who published books were compelled to use good paper; they did not know how to make poor paper. In this way we may say that the fact of adulteration evidenced an increase in knowledge. But if deceptions have multiplied in some directions they have diminished in others, while the general feeling against deception has increased enormously. The deceitful person is not held up as one to be imitated, nor, in a vast number of cases, does he really admire himself. Further, it is only the confidence that each one has in other people's general honesty—a confidence that must, on the whole, be warrantable, or it would not exist—that makes deception possible or profitable. The buyer takes the seller's word concerning the article he is purchasing because it has been his experience that, in a general way, sellers are, up to a point, trustworthy.

Secondly, the fact that A manages to deceive B does not prove that A is more intelligent than B, and that his action expresses a more advanced stage of intellectual development, or a more socially useful type of intelligence. It only represents a specialised cunning accompanied with a greater or lesser degree of moral deterioration; or, in its highest aspect, a mental trait of value in none but a special set of circumstances. The "smart" Stock Exchange operator is not of necessity the mental superior of his dupes, the jerry builder of those who purchase his houses, or the dishonest tradesman of those who buy his wares. They are merely demonstrating their superior "smartness" or cunning in a particular way, while it may well make them mentally inferior in many other directions. Indeed, they may be taken as representing, not an advanced stage of evolution, but a lower stage imposing itself on more advanced conditions.

For if we take deception in its broadest and most general aspect, the truth is reached that it is fundamentally a mode of protection adopted by the weak against the strong. Children brought up without positive fear of their parents or guardians show a far lesser inclination to deceive than those who are the frequent subjects of punishment. Subject races show the same proneness to lie and deceive. People living under an absolute monarch exhibit a far greater measure of deception than those possessing self-government; while with an arbitrary power of inflicting and collecting taxes goes the inevitable concealment of personal wealth. Finally, under a military type of government, deception and cunning are the natural defences of weakness against the tyrannical exercise of brute force. Much is, of course, said about military honour and the like; and it is true that in associations for military, as for all other purposes, certain rules of the game are established and

generally observed. Still, the fact remains that in a militant type of society cunning, lying, deceit, acts of treachery, and disregard of personal rights abound. In all these cases deception becomes the reply of weakness to strength, and represents the chief protection of the former against the assaults of the latter.

But the more command man acquires over natural forces, the greater the growth of intelligence; and the more elaborate and more important becomes the industrial life of society, the smaller becomes the protective value of deception and the more, marked its condemnation. In the commercial world letters of credit and promises to pay are honoured because the whole system would be impossible were it—except for a case here and there—otherwise. Contracts between employer and employee are carried out for the same reason. And in each direction those who are not inclined to “play the game” become marked men, and pay the penalty of the distinction. When people say that honesty in business is impossible, the reply is that business without honesty is impossible. Granted that the ethics of the business world is not that of the family circle, still it has its ethical code, which is as generally observed as are other ethical codes. Many of the deceptions in the business world instanced by my correspondent—placing large apples at the top of the barrel and small ones underneath—are only deceptions in intention, since I doubt if few are deceived in this way. And as buyers are on their guard, stooping to the trick really argues a lower order of intelligence and not an advance. It is intelligence of an ostrich-like order. And the shopkeeper or commercial man who habitually deceives discovers that his business, instead of being of a cumulative character, tends to decrease.

Moreover, the proof that deception does not represent a factor of abiding value in evolution is that by its nature it can only be practised in an intermittent manner. You cannot keep on deceiving even the dullest. It must be done occasionally, or with different persons. In this way the dice of fate are loaded in favour of the honest man; while the manner in which deceit is reprobated in politics and in general affairs is still further proof that the evolutionary emphasis is on the right side.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

THE STORY OF BIBLICAL CRITICISM

THE nineteenth-century discoveries which revealed the immense antiquity of Eastern civilisation enlarged Western concepts. Ancient Egypt, Persia, Sumeria, India, Babylonia and Assyria and, more recently, the splendid culture of Crete, showed that classical Greece and Rome were not the cradles of civilisation, but were largely the heirs of an immemorial past. Babylonian legends of our planet's creation with its later Deluge, Hammurabi's Code of Laws and other discoveries, bear so marked a resemblance to Old Testament traditions that it became increasingly evident that Hebrew mythology was mainly of Babylonian origin and only became part of the Jewish cult after the Captivity.

The recovery of the memorials of the ancient East coincided with a critical study of the Jewish Scriptures which had been idealised as divine deliverances in Christendom. Earlier in the days of Charles II. Hobbes rejected the Mosaic origin of the Pentateuch, while Spinoza detected its composite character. These, and other anomalies, were subsequently stressed by Thomas

Paine in his *Age of Reason*. But the era of scientific inquiry was opened by Eichhorn, in Germany, who emphasised the Bible's oriental origin, and the need for its interpretation in terms of Semitic ideas. His *Introduction to the Old Testament* appeared in 1783 and proved the first comprehensive effort to consistently apply critical examination of the records. Anstruc had anticipated several of Eichhorn's conclusions which he had reached independently. Ewald, a pupil of Eichhorn, published a *History of the People of Israel* in 1843, but he accepted much that is now obsolete. Several other scholars continued these studies, among them De Wette who, in the words of the famous critic Wellhausen, was “the epoch-making pioneer of historical criticism in this field.” De Wette was the first to point out that the Prophets, Judges and Kings never mentioned the Law or observed it, and that Deuteronomy was not compiled until the reign of Josiah. But these conclusions were too unpopular at the time and, to conciliate orthodoxy, were modified. Vatke resumed these studies in Berlin, while Reuss reached similar results at Strassburg, but there was a hard fight before traditional beliefs were overthrown.

Vatke was a critic of outstanding ability who adopted and developed the critical methods of his predecessor, Prof. Graf, whose *Historical Books of the Old Testament* has caused consternation in pious circles and, although his views were shared by the distinguished scholar Duhm, the reactionaries refused their acceptance.

Then Prof. Kuenen, another eminent authority, published his *Religion of Israel* in 1869. This important work derided the pleadings of the apologists as merely obscurantist. Kuenen denied any exceptional value to Jewish traditions. He swept aside the miracles and dismissed the stories recorded in the Pentateuch and Joshua as legendary, while he said the alleged history of Hebrew ideas was made possible by a chronological rearrangement. The existence of the patriarchs is very doubtful, but Moses is probably an historical character. Prof. Gooch justly pronounces Kuenen, “a profound and fearless scholar who stands beside Ewald and Wellhausen, and is not the least of the three.”

Most of these criticisms were confined to scholars but, with the appearance of Wellhausen's *History of Israel* the revelations of his predecessors were made known to the general reading public. The Law and the Prophets, he declared, were two distinct worlds. No trace whatever can be found in the pre-exilic documents of the Law, whether in Judges, Kings or Prophets. His case is summarised as follows: “The Mosaic law was not the starting point of the history of ancient Israel, but of Judaism. Deuteronomy was found in the temple under Josiah. The Levitical law was not written till after the fall of the Kingdom of Judah, and the Pentateuch was not accepted as authoritative till Ezra. It thus became possible to estimate the originality and significance of the Prophets.” This uncompromising pronouncement created immense excitement and indignation in the orthodox camp. Wellhausen was strongly assailed by conservative critics but the soundest and most influential Biblical authorities applauded his performance. So famous became Wellhausen, as a critic of the first rank, that a special essay dealing with the *History of Israel and Judah* was published in the ninth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

There was general agreement that Wellhausen's reconstruction made the evolution of Old Israel clearly intelligible. So Prof. Stade decided to continue and expand his forerunner's researches. No attempt was

made to reconcile the obscurantist party, "Our science," he said, "lags behind other historical sciences because it has been almost monopolised by theologians." In order to progress it required the co-operation of philologists, historians and authorities on comparative religion. The early history of Israel, as recorded in the Scriptures, is unreliable, he affirmed, and there is no real evidence that the Jews ever dwelt in the Land of the Nile. The account of the conquest of Canaan is mainly legendary. David seems to have been an historical personality, but the stories of the splendour of his petty principality and those relating to his son and successor, Solomon, may be relegated to the realms of fiction. As a matter of fact, their supposed magnificence has been recklessly exaggerated and their puny domain was one only among many into which Syria was then divided. Moreover, there is no evidence of monotheism in pre-exilic centuries and "ancestor worship and belief in spirits was general."

Dr. Robertson Smith was the leading critic of Wellhausen's conclusions in Britain, although he was far from orthodox himself. Indeed, Sir James Frazer regarded him as one of the pioneers of modern anthropology and dedicated his monumental *Golden Bough* to his memory. Ironically enough, an article on the Bible penned by Robertson Smith, published in the *Britannica*, led to the charge of heresy. His trial aroused widespread interest but although he was acquitted, he was deprived of his Chair at Aberdeen. But he was soon appointed Arabic Professor at Cambridge and continued his critical studies of Hebrew history until his untimely death.

Renan inaugurated Biblical criticism in France, along the path prepared by Wellhausen's school. His works were eminently successful, especially as literature. Owing to the uncertainties of life he hastened his researches, but we gather that at the age of sixty "he found himself still in good health, plunged boldly into his task, and lived to complete the most fascinating history of the Jewish people ever written."

More recently, Delitzsch's celebrated lecture in 1902 at Berlin occasioned enormous interest and animated discussion. That, and later discourses known as *Babel and Bible* asserted the dependence of Israel on earlier and far superior civilisations in the Euphrates regions. "The saga of the Flood," it was claimed, "arose naturally in a land subject to constant inundations. The Creation legends were Babylonian, the creator being the god Marduk. The story of the forbidden fruit, the serpent and the fall appear on a Babylonian cylinder. Babylonian idols were no more heathen than Roman Catholic images. Though polytheism prevailed, the idea of a supreme god was general. The moral level of Babylonian civilisation was not conspicuously lower than that of Israel, and the position of women, a legacy from Sumeria, was distinctly higher. Astronomy was invented in the plains of Mesopotamia, with the division of the hour into sixty minutes and the minute into sixty seconds. The Jews were no more original in religion and ethics than in science and law." This bold pronouncement was fiercely controverted by the apostles of tradition, but Delitzsch not only vindicated his claims but furnished further evidence for his contentions. Other progressive scholars revealed more evidences of Babylonian priority, and nothing has since emerged to nullify the justice of their claims.

T. F. PALMER.

No one who has ever performed any great thing looks big upon it; those who have anything to boast of are generally silent on that head.—W. HAZLITT.

THE RAGS OF MORALITY

J. H. G. BULLER replies to my "attack" on Ridley's logic, science and theology, in the *Miracle of the Assumption*. In his first article he said Catholic logic is deductive in contrast to scientific induction. In his third article he, himself, discards logic and uses the thimble rigging of an old dialectic chestnut. Saying "I must get back to Mr. Preece's article" he asks "Is the Vatican right?" Is this to trap me into defending it? As Chapman Cohen said, there is a difference between a horse-chestnut and a chestnut horse. You don't catch old birds with chaff. I do not say the Vatican is right, but that Ridley is wrong. Like his imputation of "stupidity" it is the age-old legal chestnut—if you have no case, abuse the plaintiff's attorney. Is this in defence of Ridley's logic?

Bernard Shaw said "Scratch an Atheist and find a Plymouth Brother." Is it heresy to challenge the logic of Ridley's case? This is rather reminiscent of Catholics who are quite adept at such polemic. But personally I think this sort of game out of place in a Freethought journal. Not only should we pay attention to our opponent's case, but also to his methods. I challenged Ridley to show his case was not consistent with that of Aquinas because I profoundly disagree with it. But I suspect that in saying the Vatican does not claim to know I jogged Ridley's memory; and it seems that Buller was convinced of Ridley's "profound knowledge of Catholic theology" by his own ignorance of that subject, for Buller now gives us a demonstration of his agreement.

In his first article, Buller said that I "assume without any evidence whatever" that Ridley agreed with Aquinas that moral law is superior to political law. But the fact that Ridley asserted moral issues is the evidence. He then followed by saying that "obviously" moral law is what Catholic theologians call divine law. If he, or Ridley, think that the Church identifies moral law with divine law he should think again. Christ in the Gospels is said to have rebuked the Pharisee, and the whole burden of the Epistles of St. Paul is that the faith of conversion is divine inspiration through the Grace of God. This is echoed in St. Augustine's *City of God* in condemnation of Pagan morality. And as both St. Augustine and St. Thomas make a clear fourfold distinction it is by no means obvious that these two are identified.

The Church, concerned with evil and not moral good, unreservedly condemns moralising as false pride and Pharisaical hypocrisy; and there is a reason why. Just as the Church has always condemned an assertion of knowledge, so also here, God only knows, and it condemns what it calls the rags of morality. Moral law, as a matter of sympathy, is superior to political law, as a matter of opinion, but is inferior to divine law, as a matter of personal conviction. The further we get away from scientific knowledge the more we are involved in relative ignorance and the more we are involved in personal feeling. The Church's case is not based upon knowledge but upon personal prejudice, hence the traditional tactics of the dialectic of abusing plaintiff's attorney.

The so-called "knowledge of right and wrong" is said to be revealed by the "still small voice" of God. The concern of the Church about "worldliness" is not moral but theological. The Pope is claimed as infallible in faith and morals, but not only is faith here put before morals, no pronouncement has ever been made. Nor, I even dare say, will any positive statement ever be made on

morality. If there were, the Church would then be tied to a positive assertion and no longer able, like Molotov, to say "No." The theological charge of immorality is not a claim of morality, it exemplifies what Hegel called the power of the negative, which goes back in tradition to the "thou shalt not" of the Bible and taboos.

Apparently thinking he is replying to me, in my assertion that the Church prefers simple faith to scientific knowledge, Buller puts the ridiculous question whether we should "scrap further scientific discovery and go back to miracle mongering." Does he believe such a thing possible? That would indeed be a miracle. I do not believe in miracles. We cannot scrap the atom bomb, no doubt we wish we could. Seemingly rubbing it in, he then goes on with a page full of recrimination of political intrigue, as with the Abyssinian war and the Spanish Civil War. I might point out that the Catholics are using the same tactics in appeal to prejudice against power politics but would like to know what all this has to do with Ridley's logic, the Miracle of the Assumption or the Papal dogma concerning it. I see no connection.

It is clear that he, himself, agrees with Aquinas that morality is superior to politics for all this is an appeal to prejudice in moral condemnation of the Vatican's political intrigue. Perhaps he thinks that in challenging the Church on moral grounds he is dealing with its theology, but even so, it is playing the theologian's own game. I would remind him that the Church has had a thousand years experience of that. Buller is apeing the theologian—the Vatican did not condemn Mussolini—"Not one word of protest"; did not condemn Franco—"Not one word of public protest"; and in other cases, "Not one word of moral censure." Just like Ridley saying science knows nothing about God, knows nothing of the soul, knows nothing of immortality; it is stealing the Church's thunder, an echo of the power of the negative in appeal to prejudice.

The argument of the Church that we do not know, that God only knows, is an appeal to ignorance; which is why moral law is said to be superior to political or scientific law. There is no argument if we know, or about what we know, we either know or we do not know; there may be argument as to whether we know, or how we know, or what we mean by knowing. If theologians use metaphysics or morality it is to play upon what we do not know. There is no science of morals, there is not even general agreement as to its subject matter; it involves psychology in moral sympathy and personal conviction. It seems that Buller also uses the moral appeal because of his lack of knowledge of the psychology of Catholic Logic and Catholic Theology. But we should face the Church's justification of ignorance with what we do know.

If morality is to be a science it should be positive, not a matter of recrimination. Moral censure of the historic past is wisdom after the event, and the Church is by no means the only organisation engaged in political intrigue. This recrimination involves the moral nature of man, with ill-feeling in the theological notion of evil. It is useless meeting ignorance with ignorance; even to a Hegelian the negation of a negation should be a positive assertion. And if we are to assert that knowledge is superior to faith we should have some knowledge of our opponent's case and tactics. But if Buller thinks he can beat a world-wide organisation with no knowledge of its logic or its propaganda I can only say he believes in miracles.

H. H. PREECE.

INDIA, A LAND RUINED BY RELIGION

INDIA, the country which blamed its troubles on British domination is now hungry, on the verge of starvation, and while taking sides in the United Nations against the United States, is begging that "Capitalistic" "Western" nation for two million tons of grain. Prime Minister Nehru has criticised both capitalistic and western nations, and has adopted the Communist slogan "Asia for the Asiatics." Yet, left to himself, he can't feed his own people. In spite of "non-resistance" preached by Gandhi, and ostensibly believed in by the new Indian Government, India is engaged in a cold war with her neighbour Pakistan, has internal disorders created by religious strife with Moslems and Hindus and because of religious strife has upset the economic stability between the two former parts of British India. Nehru will beg wheat from the United States rather than buy surplus wheat from Pakistan, and is now using land which could raise wheat to grow jute, which it could get from Pakistan, and the jute could be manufactured in India and sold abroad for cash. Such bungling is, of course, typical of most modern governments—including the United States and Britain. Communist Russia happily observes such stupidity while eliminating such handicaps herself by using economic realism and also eliminating the great handicap of religion which is at the root of most of the troubles of other nations. (The writer is no friend of the Communists, but facts are facts.)

India suffers more from religion than most other countries. She has a population of about 350,000,000 poverty-stricken, ignorant, superstitious, backward people. The population increases at the rate of about 3,500,000 a year. Birth control is prohibited or discouraged. There are now about 2,000,000 people who will starve to death unless outside aid is furnished within the next few months. Sensible birth control would eliminate much of India's cause of famines, ignorance, poverty and disease. But her religious beliefs prohibit it. Just as Italy suffers from near starvation because its population increases faster than its food supply, and the Catholic Church prohibits the one remedy, so does the Hindu Religion prohibit the solution of the problem.

There are millions of cattle in India ("sacred cows") which religious beliefs prohibit being used for food. They cannot be eaten by the people and thus keep them from starvation. Instead the cattle eat millions of tons of food which could better be used by the people. The cattle wander at will, dropping manure in the market places, which breeds flies in that hot climate, spreading disease and further reducing the efficiency of the Hindus.

Besides the cattle there are millions of monkeys eating food that should be reserved for humans. They, too, are sacred and must not be exterminated. The simians loot food stands, and when they become too troublesome are loaded into freight trains and hauled into the country where they raid the farmers' crops. They are loaded with fleas and vermin which helps to spread more disease. Neither they nor the cattle can be killed.

The Pakistan Moslems are not troubled by such insane inhibitions; they eat cattle and kill the monkeys.

Thousands of the Hindus are killed by snakes every year. In fact, the death toll by snake bite in India is almost as bad as the death toll by auto. accident in the United States—which is about 35,000 a year. Yet the Hindus do not fight back, they make no effort to exterminate the deadly cobras and other deadly serpents.

While religion has made the masses of India poor and debased to the lowest levels, the priestly class and the maharajas are tremendously wealthy. They have bushels of jewels and gold, and the maharajas are known to be among the richest men in the world. The Aga Khan, who has many followers in India, recently received his weight in diamonds. The wealth in jewels and golden idols and ornaments in the hundreds of thousands of Hindu temples has always been known to be fabulous. In fact, it was this magnificent wealth which primarily induced the Moslems from Afghanistan and Persia to invade India centuries ago. The non-meat eating Hindus fell easy prey to the flesh-eating Moslem tribesmen, who under the great Moguls, ruled India for centuries. The Moslems, largely concentrated in the West, now have their own government called Pakistan. Probably the Brahmin or priestly clan of India are an Iranian-Caucasian race, and from an earlier invasion of adventurers seeking the opportunity to also exploit the Hindus, softened as they were by their primitive superstitions—which still survives as one of the most primitive of all religions.

If the United States sends 2,000,000 tons of wheat this year, it will encourage the production of still more hungry mouths for next year, and the years to come.

Let India introduce and encourage birth control, eat her cattle, get rid of the monkeys, tax the fabulously wealthy maharajas and the priestly clan and her billions in church wealth, before she comes begging to the Western nations she criticises for "materialism." The starvation of millions in India can be directly charged to religion, as can much of the poverty in the rest of the world.

And Italy and some other Western nations could well encourage birth control, tax church wealth and royalty in order to solve their problems.

JAMES HARVEY JOHNSON (U.S.A.).

REPLYING AND ANSWERING

I THANK Mr. Rowland for his reply to my Christmas Day ruminations on guessing and verifying, and, in particular, my suggestion—quite seriously meant—that mathematicians who are solely mathematicians are, in the true meaning of the word, not scientists. But Mr. Rowland's reply is not an answer. Mr. Rowland is too intelligent not to know the distinction between these two words, but if any reader of these lines is puzzled let him consider for a moment Question Time in Parliament. It is the business of the Minister to reply to the Honorable Member, but he usually takes the greatest care not to answer him. Mr. Rowland is the soul of courtesy to his old friend, but instead of dealing with the need for verifying scientific guesses, he merely says that I make him gasp and repeats my statement about the Darwins, Flemings, Haldanes and Huxleys. The mere exhibiting of this statement in all its naïveté and native simplicity makes, in his opinion, its "fallacy obvious to all."

However, I am not sorry that he has brought out these names again. The reader will perhaps remember that I put forward these names as those of real scientists because they proved by verification their guesses about observed phenomena. Let us repeat them thus:—

Darwin, Fleming, Haldane, Huxley.

Let us then write beneath them:—

Einstein, Planck, Eddington, Jeans.

My implied suggestion was that the second group—mathematicians, physicists, or astronomers—were, in the main, guessers. Guessers—brilliant guessers, if you like—but not verifiers to the same extent as the first group. When a controversialist like the present-day Mr. Rowland seeks to buttress his argument in favour of religion by support drawn from the opinions of the second group of thinkers, surely I may with propriety trot out my group of thinkers-plus-verifiers, who, as I said, I regard as the true scientists. And, note this, I did not write that the second group "are not scientists at all." Those words are Mr. Rowland's. I only implied, which I still do, that they did not verify their guesses to the same extent as the first group.

But I want to be fair to Mr. Rowland. Maybe he ignored my point about verifying in order to deal with what he terms the "deeper issues" between us. He rightly surmises that there is a deep difference of opinion, a gulf, between us as to whether "there is a necessary contradiction between the religious and scientific point of view."

You are quite right, Mr. Rowland. We both held this view once: you, as you say, "for long," I, for longer, and; I hope, for life. To me the issue is between two groups of ideas, two ways of looking at life. Let us set out certain words pertaining to these two groups, and this time I will put first the group of words which may be said to be hallowed by antiquity.

FIRST GROUP

God, devil, religion, magic, mysticism, good, evil, heaven, hell, salvation, damnation, ghost, soul, spirit, Plato, thought apart from cerebration, theology, philosophy, logic, metaphysics, and, finally, words, words, words.

SECOND GROUP

Matter, energy, science, humanism, secularism, rationalism, commonsense, earth, body, Democritus, semantics, Behaviourism, and, finally, deeds, deeds, deeds.

One could, of course, go on adding many words to both groups, but not, I think, so many to the second. What group we ally ourself to and serve depends largely on temperament (a word from the first group) or our living human body (words from the second group). There is a great gulf between these two groups of ideas, and, so far as I know, one does not pass from one to the other more than once in a life-time. Each man to his taste. It is our plain duty to find that group that suits us best, to stick to it, and to serve it.

To make matters still more clear, let me boil down my opinion of these opposites to:—

- (1) Spirit, Religion, Fantasy.
- (2) Matter, Science, Truth.

Good-bye, Mr. Rowland. Being a poet of the Shelleyan and Byronic strain, may I close with Byron's words, for I shall not write of your apostasy again.

"Fare thee well! and if for ever,
Still for ever, fare thee well!"

Be sure you pick the group that suits you. And stick to it, "forsaking all others." Remember, it is man's greatest privilege to choose between Truth and Untruth, as he sees it.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

ACID DROPS

It is astonishing how truth will come out in the most unexpected places. Here we have that very pious journal, the *Sunday Graphic*, admitting that the religious broadcasts are one of the least listened to, and also admitting that one of the causes of this lamentable state of affairs is that they are not cheerful enough, that listeners protest about the "mournful voices and dirge-like music," and that one rarely hears a parson "sound as if he enjoyed life." And the *Sunday Graphic* wants the broadcasts to be "more cheerful." More cheerful! Ye gods!

The truth is that with an almost completely miserable religion like Christianity, which appears to have nothing to say but "Repent, Repent!" and the completely lugubrious figure of Jesus as its hero—a hero who mostly goes about cursing everybody who disagrees with him, and threatening Hell-fire in their after-life, it is just impossible for a parson to be cheerful. Of course, in general he is like other folk when he puts aside his religion, but a cheerful parson mostly causes people to gasp with astonishment.

Our contemporary, the *Church Times*, even welcomes misery in connection with its religion. The other week it gave a "reading" for Lent from *Confessio Theologica*, a work written in A.D. 990-1078. And what does its author advise? "That tribulations for Christ's sake are to be desired in this life." We "must suffer torments" every day, fastings should "break the body," and "coarse clothing grieve the flesh," and even "the belly trouble me"—only thus can you get to Christ. And a parson who has to follow this monstrous bunk is expected to be "cheerful."

Faith may be all right in a general sort of way, but Fr. C. Pidgeon, S.J., believes that it would be better for Catholics to be "absolutely unafraid to state our case by reason." Naturally, if reason overthrows the Catholic Faith, then it's not the right reason. The only true reason to be implicitly followed is that championed by the Pope and his priests, and if this is not accepted, then your fate will be a long sojourn in the flames that never quench.

When our pious professors get talking about "God's ultimate Purpose," we get into the realm of that hopeless misery about which people are always complaining. Here is Professor Coulson who teaches Theoretical Physics at King's College telling us that our little Earth will last another ten thousand million years—"long enough for God's ultimate intention, for the Divine fruition, to be fulfilled." In fact, the "Heavens declare the Glory of God" in this way. If a Professor of Physics has not progressed beyond this infantile twaddle, what hope can there be for the ordinary man? None at all, unless he has courage enough to say so—even to the Professor.

How often this wicked world of ours has been coming to an end, according to deeply pious Christians, we don't exactly know; but news has come to hand that there is a sect thoroughly versed in Scripture prophecy in British Columbia waiting for the world to end once for all. They have sold up everything and the glorious Judgment Day will soon be here when the Lord will swoop down—possibly like a thief in the night—and gather up the lucky Elect. It may be shocking bad form to say so, but per-

haps it would not be too bad a thing if they went with and to the Lord even before the wonderful Judgment Day.

The Coronation Stone is still at large. It has defied the efforts of the authorities, but more than that it has defied our superhuman mediums and clairvoyants. Quite a number have had a go, including a very famous one from the Continent, Peter Hurkos, who came here with the reputation of having solved many puzzling mysteries—and who, so far, has completely failed. Freethinkers are not surprised, of course, but what have believers in Spiritualism to say? They had a chance here of confounding the sceptic.

The cream of the joke is that if ever the Stone is found droves of them will come along and point out how they knew all the time. The legend will be built up just as the late Harry Price built up the legend of the ill-fated R101 airship, and took in everybody so well that, even when he confessed that no spirit appeared at the famous seance, he was utterly disbelieved. The case is now one of the best "authenticated" cases in the history of Spiritualism.

It is beginning to dawn upon quite a number of modern parsons that some of the religious services designed in the "Ages of Faith"—they should have been called the "Ages of Filth"—are, to say the least, "embarrassing." The Rev. J. W. Griffiths, of St. Augustine's, Fulham, thinks that to tell a young couple getting married that "marriage was ordained for a remedy of sin and to avoid fornication" is about as low a concept as possible. We should think so. And a still lower concept is the advice the celibate Jesus gave in Matthew xix, 12, for "the kingdom of heaven's sake." There could be no marriages at all if anybody believed in it—literally.

Cardinal Griffin thinks that the "gift of peace" will come "by humble supplication before the throne of Almighty God." Well, why does he not get it for us? Catholics boast of about 500 millions of the Faithful, and if this number can't persuade the Lord, what in heaven can? Why does not the Pope do something to ginger up the Almighty? A God who never does anything appears to be of no more use than a Totem.

We are not a bit surprised that two clergymen recently refused the request of the Mayor of Hobart to offer special prayers for rain. This importuning of Almighty God should be sternly suppressed. After all, it is possible that these parsons remember the number of disasters which invariably followed our own special Days of Prayer; and in any case, God seems never to do things by halves. Prayers for rain are often followed by enormous floods and the consequent destruction of farms, houses, cattle, etc. Sad to say, however, all the other clergymen in Hobart disagreed, and the prayers duly took place. And quite possibly the floods also.

The Rector of Birmingham, the Rev. Bryan Green, is quite convinced that one can accept both Evolution and Religion so long as a "Supreme Creative Intelligence" is admitted as the "Great Cause." He is "the only intelligible explanation of the Universe." You can even pray to him. And if you are still in doubt, there's always a Hell for unbelievers.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

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

SUGAR PLUMS

Glasgow readers are reminded that Mr. R. H. Rosetti lectures in the McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, this evening (March 18) for the Glasgow Secular Society, which is also a Branch of the N.S.S. His subject "What is Civilisation?" should arouse much interest and speculation. Admission is free, with some Donation Tickets, and commences at 7 p.m. It will be the last lecture of the present indoor season. On Saturday evening, March 17, Mr. Rosetti will be the guest at the Annual Dinner of the Glasgow Secular Society, which is always an enjoyable and well-attended function.

The financial year of the National Secular Society closes on March 31, and subscriptions, not already paid, will be included in the annual balance sheet if received on or before that date. The business sessions of the Annual Conference will be held in the Holborn Hall, London, W.C.1, on Whit-Sunday morning and afternoon, and a public demonstration will be held in the Conway Hall in the evening.

Will Manchester readers please note that Mr. J. Clayton lectures to-day (March 18) in the Queen's Park Parliament, Harpurhey, at 3 p.m. His subject "Words" is sure to contain a pointed Freethought message, clearly and tolerantly given.

"Man, know thyself," said Pope, "presume not God to scan; the proper study of mankind is Man." To those wishing to follow out this beneficial advice we can heartily recommend a perusal of *The Anatomy of Man and Other Animals*, by D. Stark Murray and Grace M. Jeffree. This book is an excellent introduction to the comparative anatomy of the Animal Kingdom, and gives a clear view of the evolution of life in its ascending stages from anæbea to man. The text is helped out by many drawings in black and white, and there are four plates in colour. The only fault we can find with the book is the price, i.e., 18s., which, unfortunately, places its purchase beyond the reach of many of our readers. However, local libraries may be ready to oblige.

OUR NEW THEOCRACY

IT has often been remarked that history is full of ironies. Not the least amongst such exhibitions of (what Thomas Hardy once termed) "the spirit ironic" is, to-day, exhibited in the world's youngest State. To add to the irony of the situation, the world's youngest theocracy is also its oldest. For, during the past two years, the "Chosen Race" and State of Israel, which was contemporary with Assyria and Babylon, with the Egyptian Pharaohs who reigned in the dawn of history has been reborn; and, it would appear, has been reborn substantially unchanged, at least as regards its fundamental theocratic outlook.

A sharp reminder of this strange rebirth into the modern world of the ancient religious polity traditionally ascribed to the legendary King David and to the still more hypothetical legislator, Moses, has just been afforded by the current constitutional crisis in Israel, which still persists as we write these lines. For the second time in the last year, the Israeli government of Mr. David Ben Gurion, the first prime minister of the now nearly three-year-old Jewish State which succeeded the ill-fated British "mandate" in April, 1948, has been forced to resign on account of the opposition of the religious "bloc" which holds the current balance of power in the Israeli parliament. The issue upon which Mr. Ben Gurion and his colleagues have been forced to resign was that of compulsory religious education in the immigration camps to which Mr. Ben Gurion, himself a socialist and an atheist, refused to agree. Whereupon, the clerical party of the rabbis, usually denominated collectively as the "religious bloc," who have been yoked together in an uneasy coalition with Mr. Ben Gurion's government, went into opposition and forced him to resign.

We are indebted to our contemporary, *The Observer*, for an interesting and vivid picture of the current political and religious background to the recent political crisis in the newly reborn state of Israel. From the informative article by Mr. Philip Toynbee, we learn that the Ben Gurion regime depended for its continued political existence upon an uneasy coalition between Mr. Ben Gurion's own moderately socialistic labour party, the Mapai with the "religious bloc," the medieval—or, more accurately, antedeluvian!—clerical party of the Rabbis. This last reborn organisation stands for, apparently, the integral restoration of the Old Testament theocracy, traditionally ascribed to Moses and David, but which actually received its final codification in our canonical books of Ezra and Nehemiah, after the Jewish return from the Babylonian captivity in the fifth century before our era.

Mr. Toynbee, writing in the *London Observer* (February 25, 1951), paints a depressing and, indeed, startling picture of the current social background in the rejuvenated State of Israel in the mid-twentieth century, in an age which has actually been dubbed—perhaps ironically!—as an "age of science." We allow ourselves to quote verbatim, with all appropriate acknowledgments, from Mr. Toynbee's informative article; he tells us:—

"Even as things are, Israel is half-way to being a theocracy, and the 70-odd per cent. of the population who are totally unbelieving have to endure a degree of intervention in their private and public lives which they would not dream of tolerating in any other place."

Our authority goes on to indicate some precise examples of the three-thousand-year-old religious tabus which are to-day, by a stupendous irony, compulsorily imposed

upon what we have already learned is a predominantly secularist and unbelieving population. Our authority continues:—

“All law affecting personal status is still religious; there is no civil marriage in Israel, and every question of divorce, alimony, and inheritance is decided by the rabbis. Only ‘Kosher’ meat (that is, meat slaughtered according to the barbaric Mosaic ritual law), can be imported into the State. Pigs, of course, may not be reared in Israel even on the most secular of the secular farming settlements.”

A Jewish friend of the present writer, who has recently visited Israel, not only confirms the above examples of religious tabus imposed by public authority and embodied in public law in the world's most modern state, but adds further examples of the “Mosaic” dictatorship under which Israel still groans; the Sabbath, “The Lord's (original!) day,” is observed with a religious strictness that reminds us of the grim Sabbatarian regime in the days of our ancestors. In present-day Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem no places of entertainment may legally open, nor public transport run on the Sabbath; that is, on the original Sabbath (not the Pagan-Christian “First Day” of the week), upon the “seventh day” when Jahveh, the Hebrew God, “rested from the labours” of Creation.

Such is, at present, the sorry pass to which a blind adherence to an originally tribal cult has reduced the gifted nation which has given to the world and to modern progress such intellectual giants as Spinoza, Marx, Freud, and Einstein. It is indeed a melancholy spectacle, particularly as the type of religion which the political chicanery of the rabbis has now imposed upon the professedly democratic State of Israel represents the most archaic of all. For Judaism has long since strangled the incipient tendency towards cosmopolitanism which intermittently appeared in the Old Testament, the Hebrew Bible. The current “Mosaic” creed of the rabbis is one of the most primitive nationalism conceivable. The principle of Evolution applies to religion, as to all other things. As and when viewed from an Evolutionary angle, we think it must be conceded that even such cosmopolitan creeds as Christianity and Islam must be regarded as superior to such a purely tribal cult, in which salvation is a function of the racial bloodstream, of membership of “the Chosen Race alone.” Even Christianity, however parochial it may often be in practice, at least admits in theory the existence of a common humanity, to which racial distinctions are subordinate, whereas the mental horizons of Judaism are still bound to the narrow geographical and racial limits of the “Holy Land” and “the Chosen Race.”

We began this article by referring to the ironic co-existence of the most archaic tribal cult in the most modern State, Israel. But modern rabbi-ruled Israel confronts us with a still more ironic paradox. For Israel, founded and populated so largely by the refugees from the concentration camps and gas chambers of Hitler and his Nazi “Herrenvolk” (master-race), as it was the original patentee of “racism” and the “master-race” theory, remains, to-day, its last survivor! As George Maranz, a friend of the present writer and himself a Jew emancipated from Judaism, has aptly remarked:—

“Both the ancient Jews and the modern Nazis know *what* a ‘chosen race’ is; they only disagree as to *which* it is [italics in original]. Where the virtues of the bloodstream and of race are concerned, both the canonical book of Ezra and *Mein Kampf* speak with a single voice.”

Let us hope that the Secularist majority in the current State of Israel will soon rouse itself to take energetic

and appropriate political action to end the monstrous tyranny of the rabbinical minority once and for all. Otherwise, the millions of Secularists of Jewish descent will have to resign themselves indefinitely to the present tragi-comedy of the children of the martyrs of the Third Reich perpetuating indefinitely under a religious form the monstrous tribal religion of which “Moses” (or rather, Ezra) was the Founder. That creed which the Nazi racist theorists, Hitler and Rosenberg, in our own day turned against its original Jewish patentees upon a scale which its Old Testament founders were never able to equal and with an identical ferocity.

F. A. RIDLEY.

REVIVALS

I

A PERIODICAL devoted to serious study of history asks for Revisions. One thinks of the orthodox history taught in schools, still more of the semi-fabulous or legendary stories which pass for history in popular journalism, and is intrigued at the idea of completely re-writing much that is generally accepted as history but often has little more claim to credence than other matter rejected. Besides, there is so much material in that vast Mississippi of falsehood that any writer ought to be able to dip a bucket and bring up something fresh.

Putting it simply, writers of historical fiction are sheep. They prefer to tread worn paths instead of striking out new ones. Presumably it is less trouble; or is it that their readers have the same taste in history as we find them showing in music? Rejecting what is different and original to listen to old themes reiterated with little variations except in minor details.

Thus no writer on Thomas à Becket ought to set pen to paper before considering the vast political implications of the murder in the cathedral. Because Henry the Second's act was not a hasty dash of bad temper or personal spite or a display of attempted dictatorship. A huge struggle was beginning all over Europe between the authority of the Roman Catholic Church and the growing claims of nationalism, usually centred in one monarch who, however arbitrary and autocratic he may have been, roughly represented or embodied the forming national pride and superiority of the people over whom he ruled.

As successor of the Holy Roman Empire the Roman Catholic Church made enormous secular claims. For centuries nations fought against such with varying degrees of success. Repercussions of the struggles are still with us, not definitely or finally settled.

In the same way it is not enough to regard Joan of Arc's career as a girl's personal enthusiasm, or that she was divinely inspired or alone the implement of French nationalism and patriotism. It can reasonably be argued that the same result, separation of English and French monarchies would have happened had La Pucelle remained in her peasant obscurity or never lived.

Even William the Conqueror had difficulty in retaining his dominance over England and Normandy. Subsequent events showed the impossibility of one king for England and France. Economic and political forces as well as racial and popular feeling decreed that inevitably the two must separate, Maid or no Maid. Despite all England's dealings with the Continent, both friendly and unfriendly, one fact stands clear, that Britain is not exactly European; that some degree of isolation persists and cannot be evaded or avoided. Jeanne d'Arc was merely the rallying point of the moment, the human and temporary instrument of an irresistible process which

took centuries to achieve, but cannot be conceived as other than the inescapable, almost the natural as much as logical one.

II

It would be a fascinating exercise in special pleading to write well of King John. A case for that monarch could be made. There were worse kings than he, notably William Rufus, for whom it would be hard to say a good word. Several towns in England seem to have enjoyed King John's favour and to have welcomed him. They dared not do otherwise may be said, and he smiled upon them for ulterior motives, with a view to receiving money, arms and support.

King's Lynn and Worcester are two such examples. Lynn was a great seaport of the time, clear of French and baronial influences. Worcester was a salient strategic point, particularly against the Welsh. So much did King John appreciate the latter that he left instructions to be buried there between the tombs of Oswald and Wulstan, presumably with the hope of slipping into Paradise supported by a saint on either hand. King's Lynn derives its first name from John and still has a sword of his as Mayoral mace.

More seriously the defence of John would be based on his circumstances. He became involved in the agelong resistance to the claims of Papal supremacy. On the other hand was the powerful barony. Attribute no virtue to the barons' revolt against John. Stronger kings kept the great landowners, arrogating petty kingship themselves, in order if not subjection.

William the Bastard's claim to own all the land with barons as tenants and fiefs started to break down in his lifetime. By John's reign the feudal system was so far disorganised that occupiers of millions of acres were seeking chances to throw off their obligations. In John's difficulties they saw their chance, availing themselves of the Papacy and the French monarchy as tools to forward their selfish aims.

John's troubles were aggravated by his brother Richard. That model of romantic chivalry was a useless king, spending one of his ten years regnancy in England. All he did for his country was tax it and draw off some of its best manhood to the futile, really harmful Crusades. Possibly he took with him many of the turbulent and criminal elements, otherwise the Crusades are a melancholy record; their storied and poeticised leader Coeur de Lion a sad dog if not a mad one.

III

Of Henry the Eighth it must be said he was popular. Criticised so much as he is and often condemned, few English kings enjoyed so much the support of Englishmen. This infuriates his critics and condemners, but the facts are so. A few abortive rebellions against him were worse than failures; they were fiascos. All through his reign he retained the suffrages of a majority of his subjects, enough to tide him over his marital vagaries and back him successfully against the Pope, enabling him to make drastic changes in policy and dismiss powerful ministers and lords. His influence and popularity survived over the confusion of Edward's reign and the dismal bloodiness of Mary's, so Elizabeth came to the throne acclaimed as a worthy daughter of her sire. She proved herself so, to the delight of English people and the profit of England.

IV

What a contrast to consider the Stuarts! Here we have romance and sentiment in full flood to glorify that queer family and condone their weaknesses and errors, which often reached the height of crime varied by fatuity.

About Mary Queen of Scots it is difficult to write, so thick a fog of sentimentality has gathered round her, the darling of romanticists and romancers. A volume would be needed to debunk her. Sufficient to say she did no more good for Scotland than she did for herself. In her favour it may be conceded the Scots of her time were nearly as bleak as their climate and mountains in winter, needing different treatment by a woman different from Mary.

Yet had she possessed half the charm and beauty attributed to her by gushing writers she might have wrought an upward transformation in the national character as well as in her court.

One drop of sympathy must be accorded Mary because of having to cope with John Knox, one of the pillars, more aptly grindstones, of Calvinism.

Regarding her son James the Sixth of Scotland and First of England the epigram "Wisest fool in Christendom" is mild. Unless we remember the wisdom consisted of superstitious knowledge of witchcraft, demonology, more gloomy aspects of the byways of theology, beside a nice taste in torture.

"Nothing in his life became him like leaving it" has been too much a shield and an excuse for Charles the First. That he was a good husband and kind father does not atone for the tortuous deviations of his public life, because it is by those, by his discharge of his trust as king we must judge him. Therein he lamentably fails.

So does his son Charles the Second, who escapes censure under cover of his wit and the amusement caused by his amors. They are inexhaustible sources of material to popular writers who are not likely to denigrate the character of the man whose strangely varied life is to them capital, a bank upon which they draw endless cheques, all honoured as being endorsed by an admiring public.

Lacking his father's ill-balanced courage and his brother's cleverness, of James the Second it is enough to say he withdrew from the scene discreetly if not cowardly. "Unwept, unhonoured and unsung."

James the Second's son, the Old Pretender, has now nearly disappeared as a topic with which to tickle or titivate the inquisitive, but the emotional appeal of Bonnie Prince Charlie is still worked, revived by his becoming a screen hero. His magnetism did not draw film fans to the box office so effectively as the producers hoped.

So perhaps after a whole library of books and plays about him; the best being *Duke of Albany* because most deadly; the Young Pretender will also be allowed to fade out, his career being seen not so much glorious as vainglorious, more certainly inglorious.

A. R. WILLIAMS.

THE PHILOSOPHER

What is the use of complaining

Once you've arrived on the earth?

There's often a chance of regaining

Something that really is worth.

Look all around and before you,

And don't dwell too much on the past;

I hope my advice will not bore you,

Wherever your lot may be cast.

Above all, don't jump at conclusions.

Without going into the facts;

And don't be misled by delusions

Of persons who offer you tracts.

E. W. JAMES.

"JESUS—GOD, MAN OR MYTH?"

By Herbert Cutner; published by The Truth Seeker Co., New York. 298 pp. \$2.50.

MR. CUTNER sets out his problem—either (1) there was a god Jesus Christ, or (2) there was plain man Jesus round whom developed legend, or (3) there was just legend. He then considers the evidence (1) of Christian (especially Paul), (2) of Jewish and (3) of Pagan sources; and also scrutinizes the Cross, which he considers more likely to be a mere stake, and the Mother of God. He compares Christ with other divine saviours; considers the Christian story as an allegory, or mystery; and then sets out the Myth theories after, as a warning, giving Perez's proof that Napoleon was a Sun-Myth; then he deals sharply with such critics as Messrs. McCabe, Howell Smith and Archibald Robertson. Lastly he refutes the argument that the uniqueness of Christ's teaching is a proof that it was the work of one man. Here he walks hand in hand with Mr. McCabe. Perhaps the greatest mystery to Mr. Cutner is the origin of the Gospels.

Mr. Cutner seemingly places the same emphasis on the older critics, e.g., Dupuis, Volney and Massey, as on the later, such as J. M. Robertson, Couchoud, Dujardin and their like which lends a somewhat uncritical atmosphere to a work of great and painstaking labour. He is wholeheartedly a mythicist, but he does not answer Mr. Howell Smith's objection that no other divine myth was transferred to the historic scene. If Dr. Couchoud is right, this transfer occurred in the second century; and it was due to the urgency of the message of the imminent destruction of the world. This required that the saviour god of the new mystery should have already visited the earth so that mankind could prepare for his return which foreran the end of the world. For the poorer inhabitants of the Roman world, conditions could improve only through universal destruction. Of those who prepared themselves by proper ritual and observance, the chosen few would survive; all the rest of mankind was condemned to annihilation. Their only hope lay in a belief that the Good Spirit had already descended to earth.

Whether, as is possible, a living man claimed to be this incarnation or whether, as is also possible, this visit to earth was part of a mystery ritual drama, or whether a living man, inspired by such a mystery drama, launched a new and more urgent mystery, perhaps we shall never know. The recently discovered papyri apparently of an Essene group of the first century B.C. may indicate that the player of the divine role was on occasion handed over to the temporal authorities to be put to death. But, as Pontius Pilate murmurs in Anatole France's story of *The Procurator of Judea*, "Jesus the Nazarene—I can't recall the fellow."

C. B. B.

THE "JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES"

"THE Watchtower Bible and Tract Society"—more popularly known as the organisation of "Jehovah's Witnesses"—is proud to regard itself as being at one in teaching with the earliest Christians. One of the more primitive adventist sects, riddled with weird superstitious notions, it may quite possibly be fully justified in laying claim to that dubious distinction. I cannot be sure. The life of the founder of the Society, C. T. Russell, however, certainly has about it something of that odour peculiar to early Christianity!

Charles Taze Russell was born in the U.S.A. in 1852. Though religiously educated, he "became a complete

sceptic before he was 17!" Amassing a small fortune in a haberdashery business, he incorporated his wealth; his "biblical researches" and himself into a registered society.

Russell's adventist arguments are based upon data provided by the Book of Daniel and the Apocalypse. He concluded from his studies: "We consider it an established truth that the final end of the kingdoms of this world and the full establishment of the Kingdom of God will be accomplished at the close of A.D. 1914!"

In 1909 Russell's wife was granted a divorce because of her husband's "immoral conduct with female members of the Church." And the next year, Russell was exposed by the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* for fraudulently selling "Miracle Wheat." He sued the paper for \$100,000 damages, but lost the case. He died in 1916. Surely in his career, so chequered with false prophecies, immorality, and fraud, Russell was at one with so many of his beloved early Christians!

Accepting as authoritative a bundle of ancient and disreputable Jewish books, the modern follower of Russell is opposed to "religion," politics, blood-transfusion, smoking, Catholicism and Communism. The attitude of the average "Witness," to my mind, suggests the paranoia of a Don Quixote. Myth-laden, with a solemn disregard for reality, he stalks the land fighting the windmills of his own terrible imagination. But he is a Quixote whose wild meanderings serve the interests of a well-organised business machine.

A fantastic aspect of this movement is the terrific amount it publishes. By the ton, surely! And all of it dealing in an American monotone with the same biblical texts and phrases. If it were not so pitiable, such a waste of time, money and talent, it would be a joke indeed.

But such matters have their serious side, and a seriousness that grows with the development of the present political crisis. For the well-organised "Jehovah's Witnesses," with all their bombastic nonsense, their wild prophecies and promises, direct their appeals to the more backward sections of the community. They are preaching social and political despair at a time when clear thought and careful action are a vital need.

Oblivious of culture, impervious to the data of scientific research, the "Witnesses" are an active threat to the civilising work of the scientific, moral, social and political movements. Their subsidised activities must be exposed. A little persistent ridicule now might save hard work at a later date.

RICHARD KEAN.

EINSTEIN AND RELIGION

RECENT statements in *The Freethinker* regarding Einstein's views on Religion may, it seems to me, give readers a wrong impression. The following citations from Einstein's written communication to a Conference held at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York, may be instructive.

"A person who is religiously enlightened appears to me to be one who has, to the best of his ability, liberated himself from the fetters of selfish desires and is pre-occupied with thoughts, feelings and aspirations to which he clings because of their super-personal value. . . . During the youthful period of mankind's spiritual evolution, human fantasy created gods in man's own image, who, by the operations of their will, were supposed to determine, or at any rate to influence, the phenomenal

world. Man sought to alter the disposition of these gods in his own favour by means of magic and prayer. The idea of God in the religions taught at present is a sublimation of that old conception of the gods. Its anthropomorphic character is shown, for example, by the fact that men appeal to the Divine Being in prayers and plead for the fulfilment of their wishes. Nobody, certainly, will deny that the idea of the existence of an omnipotent, just and beneficent personal God is able to accord man solace, help and guidance: also by virtue of its simplicity the concept is accessible to the most undeveloped mind. But, on the other hand, there are decisive weaknesses attached to this idea in itself, which have been painfully felt since the beginning of history. . . . The main source of the present-day conflicts between the spheres of religion and of science lies in this concept of a personal God. . . . The more a man is imbued with the ordered regularity of events, the firmer becomes his conviction that there is no room left by the side of this ordered regularity for causes of a different nature. For him neither the rule of human nor the rule of Divine Will exists as an independent cause of natural events. . . .

"In their struggle for the ethical good, teachers of religion must have the stature to give up the doctrine of a personal God, that is, give up that source of fear and hope which in the past placed such vast power in the hands of priests. . . . The further the spiritual evolution of mankind advances, the more certain it seems to me that the path to genuine religion does not lie through the fear of life, and the fear of death, and blind faith, but through striving after rational knowledge." (*Nature*, 1940, page 605.)

Surely the majority of Atheists would be in full agreement with all this?

L. HAWKES.

Remember me affectionately to the honest, heretic Dr. Priestly. I do not call him *honest* by way of distinction, for I think all the heretics I have known have been virtuous men. They have the virtue of fortitude, or they would not venture to own their heresy; and they cannot afford to be deficient in any of the other virtues, as that would give advantage to their many enemies; and they have not, like orthodox sinners, such a number of friends to excuse or justify them.—FRANKLIN.

CORRESPONDENCE

SPIRITUALISM AND MR. ROWLAND

Sir,—Mr. Cutner has dealt, in his usual trenchant manner, with the way in which the Spiritualist journal, *Two Worlds*, has taken my personal change of views as being typical of *The Freethinker*. With what he has to say on that issue I have, of course, every possible agreement. I am only too aware that my present attitude to religious questions is in no way representative of the contributors to your columns. But at the same time I do think that I am entitled to object to one remark in Mr. Cutner's article in your issue of March 4. When writing of the absurdities of Mrs. Guppy's strange journey from Highury to Lamb's Conduit Street he asks: "Does Mr. Rowland himself believe it?" I think that anyone who read that would think that I was a more or less credulous reader of *Two Worlds*. I know that some readers would accuse me of over-credulity; but it is certainly not that sort of credulity. I do not believe the truth of much of spiritualistic phenomena; I think that part of it is deliberate fraud, and the bulk of the remainder self-deception. I hope that *Two Worlds* will print that!—Yours, etc.,

JOHN ROWLAND.

[It was to the *Two Worlds* that the question was asked—we are quite sure Mr. Rowland does not believe the Guppy yarn.—EDITOR.]

RE "THE WANDERING JEW"

Sir,—One may or may not agree with Ridley's evaluation of Sue's artistry and his strictures on the literary merits of

either or both the works mentioned; but with regard to the latter a point of correction is required.

"The Mysteries of the People" is definitely *not* forgotten, it is published and marketed by the New York Labor News Co., and can still be found in some public libraries in this country.

As the translator says in his preface—"The scheme of this great work was stupendously ambitious and the author did not fall down below the ideal he pursued."

It is indeed "unique" in the sense that Sue kept his story in line with historical data unlike other so-called great historical romancers who had no scruples about perverting history to fit their tales.

Ridley's casual reference to the translator as "an American Socialist" is suspiciously like a sneer at the foremost scholar and pathfinder in the realm of sociology, Daniel de Leon, to whom Lenin referred as "the greatest of modern Socialists and the only one who added anything to Socialist thought since Marx." De Leon it was who first outlined the structure of Industrial Administration which future society must adopt.—Yours, etc.,

DAVID BRUCE.

CHRISTIANS v. FREEMASONRY

Sir,—*The Freethinker*, "Acid Drop" (March 4), showing the "bitter attack," by clergymen against each other, condemning Freemasonry, and abusing Atheists, besides exposing parsonic ignorance, is shown in many instances, as:—tearing out the tongue, etc., which is obsolete as, trial by red-hot ploughshare ordeal; even, calling Atheists "stupid," which reminds me of an incident during a lecture from the N.S.S. platform in Hyde Park. The speaker, Mr. W. P. Campbell-Everden, gave instructive facts proving the similarity of Christianity to ancient Freemasonry, when a clergyman, who said he was a Lodge Chaplain, told Mr. Everden he knew nothing of Freemasonry, and was a stupid atheist!

Mr. Everden had been a Master Mason and was author of "Freemasonry and its Etiquette," a handbook on lodge ritual, chapter etiquette, the Higher Degrees with lectures on the Tracing Board.

Mr. Everden usually ended his lectures with, "there never was a God, there never was a Jesus!"—Yours, etc.,

WM. AGUSTUS VAUGHAN.

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.
- Queen's Park Parliament (Harpurhey, Manchester).—Sunday, March 18, 3 p.m.: J. CLAYTON, "Words."
- Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barker's Pool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. A. SAMMS.

INDOOR

- Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute, Science Room).—Sunday, 6-45 p.m.: DR. MARJORIE WILSON, M.D., "Prevention is Better than Cure."
- Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, March 20, 7 p.m.: ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON, M.A., "Is There a Middle Way?"
- Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, W.C. 1.—Thursday evening, March 15: "Religion: Criticisms and Discussions." Speakers: C. BRADLAUGH BONNER, M.A., L. EBURY, F. A. RIDLEY, J. W. BARKER. Chairman: R. H. ROSETTI (President N.S.S.). Doors open 6-30 p.m., commence 7 p.m.
- Glasgow Secular Society (Branch of the N.S.S.) (McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: R. H. ROSETTI (President N.S.S.), "What is Civilisation?"
- Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: R. O'NEILL MONTGOMERY, "The Scourge of Venus."
- Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: DR. JOHN LEWIS (Editor, *Modern Quarterly*), "Does the Soul Exist?"
- South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: S. K. RATCLIFFE, "Britain and America Now."
- West London Branch N.S.S. (The "Laurie Arms," Crawford Place, Edgware Road, Marylebone, W. 1).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: P. C. KING, "Some Reflections on Evolution."

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