

# THE FREETHINKER

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## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### Religion Takes the Air

UPON Wednesday, January 2, the "Home Service" of the B.B.C. broadcast a programme from 6-45 to 7 p.m. which is of particular interest to Freethinkers in general and to members of the "National Secular Society." The title of this broadcast was "The mission of religious broadcasting," and the speaker was a clerical official of "Broadcasting House," the Reverend Francis House, the head of the "Religious Department" of the B.B.C.

The subject of Mr. House's talk is explained by its title: as a statement of the aims, fundamental purpose, and methods which inspire religious broadcasting. Mr. House's speech had considerable merit: it was the work of an experienced speaker, lucidly reasoned, and delivered with clarity and precision; the work of an old hand in radio technique. But it was primarily its subject-matter that made it a broadcast of particular interest not only to all Secularists but, we think that we may fairly add, to all democrats who realise that now as ever, "eternal vigilance remains the price of Liberty," if the State-apparatus is not to be abused by interested minorities to the public detriment.

Mr. House permitted no ambiguity in his statement of his subject—"The mission of religious broadcasting." Its fundamental aim, as defined by the reverend speaker, is to—in current advertising jargon—"sell religion" to the general public, Christian and non-Christian alike, particularly to the latter, nor did Mr. House beat about the bush when it came to defining what sort of religion constituted the particular brand of goods which his department was trying to "sell": it is the Christian religion in its integrity, that is, the fundamental dogmas agreed upon by all "orthodox" (that is, presumably, Trinitarian) Christians and by all the Churches from Rome, via Canterbury, to the non-Conformist Churches who adhere to the traditional creeds. Thus, the B.B.C. is here defined as a purely Christian body: indeed, Mr. House went out of his way to remind his hearers that other religions are catered for in other B.B.C. programmes. Moreover, his definition of Christianity would seem to include all orthodox Christians, even the most obscurantist, but to exclude definitely Unitarians and, presumably, "liberal Christians," people of "modernist" tendencies. Certainly, we do not recall ever hearing those "enfants terribles" of Anglicanism, Drs. Inge and Barnes "on the air." The more cautious modernism of Dr. Donald Soper is, apparently, about as far as the orthodox pundits of "Broadcasting House" are prepared to go. (Actually, we doubt if even Dr. Soper would have passed the required test when, a good many years ago now, the present writer had the pleasure of debating with him on Tower Hill, and succeeded in drawing some remarkable admissions from that eloquent apostle of Methodism!).

Thus, it is the Christian Faith in its integrity, as defined by St. Vincent of Lerins in the classic definition:

"What was taught always, everywhere, and by all": that a Government department, paid out of the taxpayers money, regards it as its duty to teach, with the full approval apparently of the British Government and the Houses of Parliament; since, after all, it is they who issue its Charter to the B.B.C. and who find the ready money for this expensive "Ministry of Information," and who "pays the piper, proverbially, calls the tunes." It would seem still to be true that, in the 20th century as in the 18th, "Christianity is still part of the laws of England," as then judicially defined by the persecutors of "Tom" Paine and of his disciples and of the salesmen of *The Age of Reason* and its kind.

However, whilst Christianity itself is ancient, the B.B.C. technique for "selling" it to the public is ultra-modern. Religious propaganda "on the air," as described by Mr. House, is run with all the efficiency and modernity of "Big Business," the primitive Christian apostles would never have satisfied the technical requirements of the "Religious Department": St. Paul in the studios of "Broadcasting House" would have made an amusing comedy. Mr. House informs us that all the "orthodox" Churches are represented on the advisory council of his department, including Rome: the fact that this state of things, one incredible in the 19th century, is so to-day, indicates the decline of the State-Church and, perhaps, presages the ultimate disappearance of Anglicanism. The speakers on the radio, we were told, are chosen with the greatest care, and many successful practitioners of pulpit oratory fail when put before the microphone. Perhaps, had Our Lord had to pass the ordeal of an "interview" in the studios, the Sermon on the Mount would never have been delivered—if, indeed, it ever was!

Such are the elaborate techniques used by the official information service of our so-called democracy to put over what is, by all available statistics, the religious beliefs of a small and ever-diminishing minority of the population of this island. There is, however, one weapon used persistently, not only by the "religious department" but, also, by the Governors of the B.B.C. with whom, under the general supervision of the State, all decisions on policy lie. Mr. House did not, in the course of his comprehensive survey of the current situation, once refer to this weapon—for fairly obvious reasons! For the weapon to which we refer is surely one of which any genuinely civilised and/or democratic nation would be ashamed to use: the unvarying boycott and effective prohibition of all serious opposition. For it is well known to all, at any rate to all regular "listeners in" who possess any discernment, that there is a fairly lengthy list of subjects, most of them of fundamental importance, which are taboo at "Broadcasting House," and that amongst the topics subject to this rigorous "conspiracy of silence," religion occupies a foremost, if indeed, not *the* foremost place: at all costs, the general public must be prevented from hearing the anti-Christian case: indeed, since "prevention is better than cure," the vast unseen audience of the radio must,

if possible, be prevented from knowing that any such anti-Christian case exists! The voice of reason, the considered verdict of historical and scientific criticism must never be allowed to intrude upon the endless inanities and unblushing falsehoods which make up so much of current religious dissertations "on the air."

In fairness, one should, perhaps, add that the Reverend Francis House did not originate this current boycott of anti-Christian ideas: it originated long before his time. The present writer in, we seem to remember, 1943, was present at a public lecture given by the Hon. Harold Nicholson, at that time a Governor of the B.B.C. In the course of his speech, Mr. Nicholson quite casually remarked that he was an agnostic and, as such, did not subscribe to any religious belief or institution. When, however, a naive member of the audience (not the present writer!) suggested that, as a self-confessed agnostic, Mr. Nicholson might use his influence to give the public a chance to hear views on the air analagous to his own, the speaker, whilst reiterating his own indifference to religion, declared that whilst he held his position as a Director of the radio monopoly, "there will be no anti-god talks given on the air"! Nor have there been!

So tight, indeed, is the net drawn that only on the rarest occasions does the unwritten censorship slip up, of course, "accidents do happen, even in the best-regulated families." Fred Hoyle, for example, in his well-known series on astronomy, when a well-known lady writer of detective stories turned amateur theologian in order to repair the damage. The resulting fiasco seems to suggest that the B.B.C. motto: "prevention is better than cure," may be the best, after all!

We have no hesitation in describing the B.B.C. as being from the point of view of Secularism if not of democracy, the most dangerous institution in this country. The tremendous weapon of mass-propaganda is wielded by an anonymous dictatorship on behalf of a reactionary minority. Perhaps the most important practical question which confronts militant Secularism to-day, is how to break the dead hand exercised by this spiritual "Star Chamber" of the air.

F. A. RIDLEY.

### SCIENCE AND RELIGION

IN his letter (*The Freethinker*, November 18) Mr. John Rowland quotes R. A. Millikan, "the American physicist and expert on cosmic rays" in support of his contention "that a new period of accommodation or even friendliness between science and religion is upon us." According to Dr. Millikan, "Religion and science are, in my analysis, the two great sister forces which have pulled, and are pulling, mankind onward and upward." Mr. Rowland says that this, "taken with statements from Einstein, Planck and others, goes to show that the old idea of a war between science and religion is now far less strongly held than was the case fifty years or more ago." All of which means, I suppose, that in Mr. Rowland's opinion, we are at last within view of that happy stage in human progress in which there is neither contradiction nor antagonism between the doctrines of science and the dogmas of religion—the lion is at last about to lie down with the lamb.

Now the citing of great names in support of an argument, especially when the argument concerns the truth of religion, is a very inconclusive method of proof, because where there are, as usually happens, authorities on both sides of the question it invariably ends in our accepting those that

favour our own view. In the present case the practice is particularly ineffective.

I ask Mr. Rowland, why should "Einstein, Millikan, Planck and others" be so confidently accepted as authorities on the credibility of religion? If we take their several contributions to science can Mr. Rowland point to anything in the Relativity theory, the Quantum theory or the theory of Cosmic Rays that has any bearing whatever on the truth of supernatural religion? That a few men, eminent in science, have, at one time or another, let slip certain remarks which favour religion has by no means the importance which Mr. Rowland, in his eagerness to bolster up his newly entertained beliefs, attaches to it. To regard such statements as *ex cathedra* is absurd. The range of their researches being necessarily confined to *natural* phenomena, scientists have no more a "voice potential" on the subject of religion than the layman. Assuming that there were such a state as the supernatural, its existence could be proved only by evidence equally supernatural, which is only another way of saying that it could not be scientifically demonstrated.

Even Eddington, who has on certain occasions, shown a leaning towards religion, denies that it can be proved by science. "I repudiate," he says, "the idea of proving the distinctive beliefs of religion either from the data of physical science or the methods of physical science" (*The Nature of the Physical World*, p. 333). And again, "The religious reader may be well content that I have not offered him a God revealed by the Quantum theory, and therefore liable to be swept away in the next scientific revolution" (*Ibid.*, p. 353). Also, in his controversy with Chapman Cohen in *The Freethinker*, he says, "I do not suggest that the new physics prove religion or give any positive ground for religious faith." If there has been any attempt at "accommodation" it has not been on the part of science which, in its attitude towards religion, has remained rigidly uncompromising. Will Mr. Rowland tell us, for instance, in what way the principles of Evolution, Geology or Astronomy, as now accepted, are less incompatible with Biblical religion than they were fifty years ago?

It is on the side of religion that the spirit of accommodation and compliance has shown itself. In proof of this we need only glance through a few of the numerous books by religious writers in which the basic doctrines of religion are either discarded altogether or whittled down to bring them into line with scientific requirements. These ill-judged attempts are, however, only hastening its dissolution. Religion, unlike science, is, in its very nature, static and unprogressive. That which, in an age of ignorance, it once delivered as inspired truth cannot now be maintained in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary—to alter is, in its case, to destroy. Its finality has been its bane.

As for Dr. Millikan's statement which Mr. Rowland so confidently quotes, it is so obviously and foolishly false as hardly to be worth the slight effort necessary to refute it. So far from being a co-operant force with science in "pulling mankind onward and upward" a very little acquaintance with history is enough to show that from the 16th to the 19th century—from Bruno and Galileo to Darwin—organised religion was unremitting in its hostility to science, using every means in its power, however arbitrary and cruel, to check its progress. Since then the growth of science and the decay of religion have been concomitant and proportionate. What Mr. Rowland mistakes for "a new period of accommodation and friendliness between them" is simply due to the fact that, what religion can no longer oppose, it seeks by compliance to

reconcile, even to the extent of relinquishing many of its former claims.

So much for Mr. Rowland's "contention." On no other subject has mankind believed more and known less than on religion; and the result of this combination of credulity and ignorance has been that no other subject has been so prolific of hatred and strife.

So much for "one isolated sentence" from Dr. Millikan's book.

A. YATES.

### "THE ATHEISM OF ASTRONOMY"

THE book with the above title by Woolsey Teller (The Truth Seeker Company, New York), is in my opinion a notable work; for it does what it claims to do—refutes the theory that the universe is governed by an intelligence. The author's refutation is undertaken most capably.

A few inaccuracies may be noted. The most distant extra-galactic nebulae are said to be 140 million light-years; this should be 500 million light-years with the 100-inch reflector, while the 200-inch doubles this distance. Neptune's moon does not move counter to the *entire system of moons*; in moving retrograde, it is only doing what the three outer moons of Jupiter do, and also the outermost moon of Saturn. The figure for the rotation of our galaxy should be 250 million years, and not 300 million. It is not now correct to say the sun's distance is "nearly 93 million miles"; actually it is over that figure, being 93,003,000 miles. A solar prominence 350,000 miles high is quoted as exceptional; but others 500,000 and even 625,000 miles high have been seen. The feebleness of full moonlight is given as 1/500,000 of sunlight; this should be only 1/1,000,000 of sunlight. It is not correct to say the "origin of the asteroids is well known"; and that they are the "broken remains of a single primeval planet," (Jeans). On the contrary, they may be the remains of a ring of matter once distributed round the sun. "Some of these bodies do not exceed 10 miles" should be "one mile." The largest meteorite in the world is given as the Greenland one of 36½ tons; this should be nearer 90 tons; otherwise the record is broken by the African one of 50 to 70 tons.

Woolsey Teller deals most successfully with the feeble arguments of the theist about the "stately procession" of planets, the "beautiful order of the heavens," the "harmony of the spheres," the "regularity" of the seasons, and so forth, showing that there are no such things. He points out in a separate chapter that "Satellites disprove design." I agree. I go further and say that a detailed examination of all the moons in the solar system with a view to their having been designed "to rule the night" is enough to prove the utter lunacy of a Designer. One has only to consider the inadequacy of our own moon to this end; further, the fact that our earth is a better night-light to the uninhabited moon than that body is to us makes one doubt the Designer's sanity. Uninhabited Jupiter has 11 moons! The author describes the design of the solar system as "a first-class funk," and to say there is "planning" in it is "drivel to the scientist." How right he is! He devastatingly points out how most of the planets are either too near the sun or too far away. "The Divine Wisdom which placed Mercury smack-up against the sun and left Pluto far off in freezing cold must have been actuated by a satanic sense of humour," Teller writes.

Teller then counters the idiotic arguments of theists that those planets now unpeopled may one day see life. Take Mercury, which is insufferably hot; it is moving away

from the sun; may it not be fit for life when cooler? The answer is that God seems in no hurry to people Mercury as its rate of movement away from the sun is merely a few feet a century, so that life could not come for billions of years! The other planets are even in worse state from the point of view of abodes of life.

On "planned orbits" we are reminded that *elliptical* orbits, as all orbits are, are less safe than would have been circular ones, as collisions are much more likely in the former case. So theists who admire and worship "nicely planned" orbits are admiring the survivors, the rest being relegated to the scrap-heap. Of what use are meteors flying about space, or comets? To what end is the colossal waste seen in "bursting stars"? or in smashed planets? or in the vast squandered heat of the sun? Millions upon millions of tons of solar energy are poured daily into space and wasted in the yawning abyss of outer darkness and cold instead of being distributed to planets badly needing heat. All this blindly-working futile stellar mechanism produces trivial ends which are like their beginnings. There is nothing in all this to suggest a Supreme Stoker or Celestial Engineer. With fearless candidness Teller goes on: "No mentality above the level of an idiot would devise such madhouse schemes as that of spinning billions of globes aimlessly for billions of years. . . ." He then adds the humorous touch—"The relation between the amount of material from which our solar system came and the puny result of our earth is as ludicrous as if a baker mixed a batter of dough the size of the sun to bake one crumb of bread. . . ." He writes that "Theism in its absurdity finds its most ludicrous aspect . . . where God is represented as . . . an Intelligence running loose round the universe without body or brain directing the course of the stars. . . ."

He rightly points out that the time-period in astronomy is deadly to the stupid assumption of the existence of a god solicitous for life as exemplified in man; for from the nebulae to man has consumed millions of millions of years. So it is up to the theist to explain why life has been reached by this idiotically roundabout process; further, why life even then is restricted in the universe to a microscopic point in space and as unimportant to the cosmic wastes as the "ravings of a maniac are to the distant nebula of Orion. . . ."

There is one quotation of Teller's that I consider might be adopted by Freethinkers as a text to hang at their bed-heads—"The vast abyss of space is both our womb and our tomb." Altogether a most convincing book, and one which should be on the bookshelf of every scientifically minded Freethinker.

RUBY TA'BOIS.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY  
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RECEPTION	TICKETS	DINNER
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### ACID DROPS

**Progress, as we all know,** proceeds very slowly, but it does continue all the same, and it affects the most unlikely places. Even the B.B.C.! For to our great astonishment that august corporation recently broadcast a report by an archæologist in Mesopotamia. The lady was working on the site of the city of Nineveh, the old Assyrian capital. She reported that Nineveh was sacred to the Fish God, and proceeded to advance the daring hypothesis that, when the Bible tells us that Jonah "descended into the belly of the great fish" (or whale), all it meant was that the prophet went to Nineveh for three days. "Higher criticism" in the studios of the B.B.C.! "Fundamentalists," please note that "Jonah's whale" has gone to join his now rapidly vanishing species. But where was Jesus during his three days "below ground"? Perhaps, some fine day, the B.B.C. will enlighten us upon His whereabouts, too.

**The serpent of Rationalism,** theologically disguised as "modernism," seems no longer to be confined to Dr. Barnes's diocese of Birmingham, but is also spreading its tentacles throughout the Anglican communion. The latest victim of the virus is St. Paul's Cathedral, the chancellor of which famous shrine, Canon Collins, has just expressed the heretical view that the Anglican Church makes a great mistake in insisting upon its clergy subscribing to the Creeds and to the Thirty-nine Articles before Ordination. *The Freethinker* entirely concurs with Canon Collins on this point. For it is surely obvious that a young man who, in his early twenties, declares he will always think the same as he does at his ordination is, in effect, signing a declaration that he will never grow up.

**Most Christians, of course, believe** that the mistletoe is an exclusive Christian institution designed by the Holy Trinity for the express purpose of the glorification of Jesus Christ at Christmas; if they had been listening to a recent broadcast they would have been shocked to learn from experts that the mistletoe was in reality a plant used in "fertility" rites for centuries before the Christian era—and that the harmless practice of kissing under it was, as one of the broadcasters admitted, an "attenuation" of the ancient motive. Pious listeners would no doubt have been more astonished if they learnt that most of the festival days and rituals connected with God's Own Religion were all pinched from Paganism, and that that was the only way in which Christianity could have been propagated. They will learn the truth one day.

**Although many things** have made the Welfare State of 1951 memorable, the increase in cruelty to children and animals mostly, if not altogether, by Christians, stands out as a terrible blot on our boasted civilisation. Religion is rigorously taught in our schools, and yet cruelty to animals, according to the Secretary of the R.S.P.C.A., is "on the increase particularly among children." It is much worse in fact than when a kind of indifferent undenominationalism was taught in the schools. Will some very religious teacher explain why?

**Our contemporary, "Peace News,"** informs us that "The American Bible Society has one million Russian Bibles stored in its warehouses ready for shipment in anticipation that some day the iron curtain will lift." We assume that the chapters in *The Acts of The Apostles* which bade the early Christians "hold all things in common," have been omitted as contrary to "the American way of life."

**"The Abominable Snowman"** is again in the news. The footprints of this mysterious creature have again been seen high up amid the eternal snows of the Himalayas. Several theories have been advanced in order to explain these, as yet unexplained footprints. Bears, baboons, and unknown anthropoids have all been invoked to supply "The Missing Link."

We have, however, our own theory which has at least the conspicuous merit that it is quite impossible to disprove it. The tracks of "The Abominable Snowman" are those of "The Wandering Jew"—run to earth at last.

**Our good Methodists** are still on the warpath. For them, dancing is the abomination of the Lord, all theatres should be shunned, playing cards belong to the Devil, while a game of cricket on a Sunday must lead all concerned to the Bottomless Pit. The Rev. H. M. Hart, who is Minister of the Wellington Methodist Circuit, complains that club cricket matches played on a Sunday are "a matter of public concern." This is just nonsense. They concern nobody but a gang of Christians who hate and have always hated other people enjoying themselves in their own way. Methodist Sabbatarianism should be scotched by our young people, and they have only themselves to blame if it is not.

**To keep well in** with its pious readers *The Recorder* published an article entitled, "How the New Testament was Written"—without in the least telling us. Nobody knows "how" or "where" or "when" it was written. Merely to repeat the dates given by the Roman Church—for example, to tell us that Mark "wrote the first Gospel between 67 and 70 A.D.," tells us nothing whatever, for neither the Church of Rome nor anybody else knows. It is pure speculation. But then perhaps *The Recorder* readers will swallow anything.

**Spiritualism, being in the "news,"** is now being taken up by more than one national newspaper. For example, *Reynolds* had a long article about it by the Editor of *Psychic News*, full of the usual marvels—which, incidentally, cannot be tested. As a sort of antidote, Prof. Haldane was asked to reply without giving us any reason why a distinguished biologist should also know all about Spiritualism. Needless to add, he didn't, and could only profess his disbelief without in any way touching upon anything said by Mr. Austen. Then Miss Geraldine Cummins was dragged in with her "interview" with Bernard Shaw just after that great man had died. And opinions were asked for.

**Unfortunately the only opinions** really wanted were those not too hard upon the case for Spiritualism: otherwise the rope-in or regular readers from the Spiritualist ranks would undoubtedly cease. As an instance, take the case of Miss Cummins who had gained "fame" by her "scripts" supposed to be dictated to her from the spirit world—from rabbis and other inhabitants of Palestine in the time of Jesus. Did they (the spirits) speak in Hebrew or Aramaic? Certainly not. They spoke in the style of the A.V. of the Bible—an English made up mostly for its "reverence," and certainly never spoken in either Elizabeth's or James's reign. And yet Spiritualists swallow the twaddle that the "scripts" all come from spirits.

# "THE FREETHINKER"

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## TO CORRESPONDENTS

D. E. JONES.—Pleased to learn you are forming a Branch of the R.P.A. in Nuneaton. We note your address is 61, Clifton Road, Nuneaton.

E. J. FORD.—We cannot enter into a discussion on capitalism.

THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, £1 4s.; half-year, 12s.; three months, 6s.

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.

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

Lecture Notices should reach the Office by Friday morning.

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.

## SUGAR PLUMS

Due to the tragically sudden death of two of its members, Mr. A. C. Rosetti and Mr. R. H. Rosetti, the G. W. Foote Company, owners of *The Freethinker* and *The Pioneer Press*, has been reorganised. The Board now consists of Mr. W. Griffiths (chairman), Mr. J. W. Barker, Mr. F. A. Ridley, and Mr. Bayard Simmons. All the above gentlemen have a long association with Freethought and with the organised secular movement. Mr. F. Kenyon remains secretary. Mr. Griffiths and Mr. Barker are both experienced businessmen, whilst Mr. Ridley and Mr. Simmons are specialists on the literary side and have both, of course, been regular contributors to *The Freethinker* for many years. The new Board is sure that it can surmount the present difficult situation and confidently appeals to the readers of *The Freethinker* for their support and co-operation in furthering the aims and principles for which our paper and movement stands.

The Birmingham Branch of the N.S.S. recently decided to play its part in ensuring that this journal should go on. Members not only raised and sent the gift of £10 acknowledged in these columns, but they have promised us further donations of £1 monthly. Such good ideas deserve publicity, so that others may know of them and follow suit. If every N.S.S. branch devoted a meeting to considering how it could help *The Freethinker*, results could not be other than beneficial to the cause. Eventually a much-increased sale will solve the problem, but meanwhile continuous support of "The Freethinker" Fund is needed to reduce the drain on capital resources. The future of our movement must not be jeopardised through apathy and defeatism to-day. So bravo Birmingham, and we hope that its example will be widely imitated.

Harold Day, devoted propagandist of Freethought in Bradford for many years, is not the man to let opportunities of combating religious smugness and the claims of quacks pass, and we were interested to receive copies of letters he recently sent to the B.B.C. "Dear Sir" editor and to the *Sunday Chronicle*. The former has allowed listeners to become aware that not everyone believes in a God, and H. D. wrote carrying the discussion further; his arguments, however, never came on the air. Nor was his letter to the newspaper, which had given a boost to the "amazing cures" effected by the faith-healer of the

## "THE FREETHINKER" FUND

Donations for week ended Saturday, January 12, 1952:—

W. G. Birch, 10s.; H.H., £3 11s. 4d.; E. A. McDonald, £1; Rookie, £5; W. H. W. Ballast, £1 1s.; Tom Colyer, £1; C. Bridger, 2s. 6d.; H. Beck, 10s.; Bolton Branch N.S.S., £1 15s. 6d.; J. J. Cohen, 10s.; J. Edward, 5s.

Total for week: £15 5s. 4d.

Total received to date: £430 14s. 4d.

moment, honoured by being printed. We know the reason. Day's letters were straight from the shoulder punches, and those in command of the channels of public information prefer to deal gently with muddled ideas and credulity.

Are uncompromising approaches to the B.B.C. and the Press a waste of time then? Not at all, for, though the task appears a thankless one, strong criticism does bring home to those in positions of responsibility that they are under observation, making for rather more fairness in discussion than would otherwise be afforded. Nevertheless, it takes character and determination to keep up the contest.

## WHAT DOES THE BIBLE MEAN?

IF the Rev. E. K. Victor Pearce really thinks that he laid a "bait" for me "to nibble at" with his "flat earth," he had better think again. I might just as well say I laid one for him with my quotation from Peter.

With regard to the first verse of Genesis which he says I "misquoted," I can only say that he is guilty of a "terminological inexactitude," two words which he can translate into a simple word of three letters. The worst of it is that when a good old Christian lie gets a start it is very hard to catch up with, and I may never overtake it. My copy of the Bible is "The Variorum Teacher's Edition of the Holy Bible"—one of the best editions because of its voluminous notes; and, in addition, I have a copy of the Revised Version. In both these, the first sentence is, "In the beginning God created the *heaven* and earth"—not "the *heavens*." It was not I, but the Holy Bible which translated the word for "heaven" in singular; and I ask Mr. Pearce for an apology, or to agree that I did not "misquote" the passage.

I am, of course, not concerned with the way it *ought* to be translated, and I am quite sure that Mr. Pearce does not know how either. The way of a transgressor may be hard, but it is nothing to the way of a Hebrew translator. Hundreds of passages in our A.V. have had to be translated afresh for the R.V., and nobody *really* knows which is the correct translation. It is the same with the Greek. Nothing can be much more amusing than to take various versions of the Bible and compare them. As an example, let us take the "Lord's Prayer," perhaps the best known of anything in the Bible, and which, at least, should have been correctly translated. In the A.V., it has 66 words; in the R.V., it has 55, and the wording is very different. The words, "For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen", are omitted though, as this would be too big a break with tradition, they are given in the margin. But did "our Lord" actually say them? Not even the most reverent Christian (or Rationalist) knows, and certainly Mr. Pearce does not. Yet he will teach the A.V. of the prayer quite solemnly, as if solemnity added to the truth.

Then he says that with regard to my quotation from Peter, I should have "referred" to the margin. The verse is, "The earth standing out of the water and in the water"; the word "standing," he contends, should have been, as in the margin, "existing." Well, it is not "exist-

ing" in my Bible, but "consisting," and the reader can now see that here in two cases where it is concerned, Mr. Pearce, who is a man of God, does not even know his Bible. I might add that in the first verse of the Bible, the Hebrew word for God is in the plural and actually means "Gods," and should have been so translated. But I doubt if Mr. Pearce knows this.

Out of curiosity, I looked into a few versions of the N.T. to see how the verse from Peter was translated. The R.V. has "compacting," while Moffat has "an earth which the word of God formed of water and by water." The translation of the Sinaitic Codex I have, gives "an earth cohering out of water and through water"; while Young in his *Literal Translation of the Bible*, gives "the earth out of water and through water." You pays your money and takes your choice but the fact remains that, as far as a flat earth is concerned, that is what the Bible writers thought and taught. When Mr. Pearce tells us "much less science was known" when the A.V. of the Bible was made than now, he is, of course, conceding the whole of our case. If the Bible is so inaccurate as to clash with modern science, and its words and meaning now have to be adjusted to come in line with modern science, he has annihilated "revelation." I wonder what his flock thinks of his adjusting the Bible translation to come in accord with "infidel" science?

Whether Professor Rendel Short has shown "how remarkably in harmony this first chapter in Genesis is with the known facts of geology especially in the Hebrew from which our authorised version was translated" may be true as far as Mr. Pearce is concerned; but he has certainly not shown it to me. Mr. Pearce in the first place should have known that the A.V. was by no means translated out of the "original" Hebrew; and in the next place he should have made it clear who Prof. Short was. The way his "authority" is dragged in is as if it was equal to that of Darwin or Huxley. Outside a small circle of Fundamentalists, Prof. Short is quite unknown, and what he has to say on geology or biology or astronomy is—if not supported by science—quite worthless.

In actual fact, there are two cosmogonies in Genesis, one dictated by "Elohim" (or "Aleim") and the other by Jehovah (or "Yahveh") and they are both in the "original" Hebrew and just as "sacred" as each other. In the first, the earth is covered with water. In the second, it is a dry plain. In the first, "the earth brought forth grass and herb." In the second "The Lord God . . . made every plant of the field *before* it was in the earth." In the first, fowls and fish are created on the *fifth* day, land animals and reptiles on the *sixth*; in the second, fowls and land animals are created on the *same* day. In the first, fowls are created out of *water*; in the second, "every fowl of the air" is created "out of the *ground*." In the first, trees are created *before* man; in the second trees are created *after* man. In the first, fowls are created *before* man; in the second, *after* man. In the first, man is created *after* the beasts; in the second, *before* the beasts. In the first, man and women are created at the *same* time; in the second, woman is created *after* man. In the first, "the heaven (or heavens) and the earth" were created in six days; there is nothing about the six days in the second.

There are many more discrepancies but Mr. Pearce had better deal with these before I go on to give him another dose. As Dean Stanley said at the funeral of Sir Charles Lyell: "It is now clear . . . that the first and second chapters of Genesis contain two narratives of the creation, side by side, differing from each other in almost every particular of time, place, and order." And Huxley pointed

out, "Five-sixths of the public are taught this adamitic monogenism as if it were an established truth, and believe it. I do not; and I am not acquainted with any man of science or duly instructed person who does." If he had known Prof. Short or Mr. Pearce he would probably have made them his two exceptions.

What is Mr. Pearce's "anti-Evolution" worth? Just nothing at all. It is not even based on the Bible for Mr. Pearce appears to know precious little of God's precious Word. And he has been utterly unable to prove that the Bible writers knew of anything whatever except a table-like earth, and two different cosmogonies.

But he would not dare to read out this article to his all-believing flock.

H. CUTNER.

#### NEWS ITEM

Our Gracie's getting married,  
Away there in Capri.  
She's going to marry Boris,  
And *he's* a staunch R.C.

Of course *she'll* stay a Protestant.  
She went and saw a priest,  
Who said she needn't change her faith.  
Not yet awhile, at least.

It's understood that Boris  
Will try his level best  
To woo her and convert her,  
And she must not protest.

"Of course I won't," said Gracie.  
The priest said, "If you please,  
We'll now come to the children.  
You'll bring them up R.C.s?"

"I love him so," said Gracie,  
"I'll promise that and more.  
They won't half laugh in Rochdale,  
And me turned fifty-four!"

P. V. M.

*The Manchester Guardian* reports the strange case of the Jews of Cochin in Southern India, who recently emigrated to Israel and are now anxious to return. The Cochin Jewish community consists of 3,000 Jews divided into three colours, white, brown, and black; three castes modelled on Hinduism, and eight synagogues which follow different rituals. As in Old Testament times, polygamy is permitted. Furthermore, the colour bar is in force as between the three castes of different colour, yet they all belong to "the chosen race." Wonderful, truly, are the ways of the Lord!

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## MEN OR BEASTS?

Right from the time of their first conquest of the Americas, the Spaniards discussed the question whether the Indians were men or beasts. Fr. Bartholomew de las Casas sought to protect the natives and suggested to the Spanish monarchy that negroes—whom he considered as animals without souls—should be imported to ameliorate their harsh lot. In opposition to whom the theologian Juan Gines de Sepulveda advanced the view that the Indians did not possess souls and might accordingly be legitimately treated as beasts of burden.—(Victor Alba in *La Revue Socialiste*.)

## CORRESPONDENCE

## WHO'S BEING RATIONAL?

SIR,—In your issue December 30 Oswell Blakestone writes: "Surely, if they (politicians) cannot guarantee peace and prosperity, they should be dismissed instantly by their masters, the public, as incompetents."

Who among us could give such a guarantee? And who, having given it, could do as promised? In what way can "The Public" be expected to act otherwise than they now do?—Yours, etc.,

C. E. RATCLIFFE.

## ROME AND IRISH POLITICS

SIR,—Re "The Vatican in English Politics," you state that all Irish political parties are completely subservient to Rome. This is not true. In 1949 the Socialist Party of Ireland was founded. This Party has the same principles as the Socialist Party of Great Britain. It consists of scientific socialists who accept the economic interpretation of history, the materialist conception, and the theory of surplus value.

They, and their companion parties, are the only political parties not open to religious people, as Socialists must necessarily be Atheists. I would suggest to your contributor, Oswell Blakestone, that he read the Socialist Party's literature, as neither *The New Statesman* or *Peace News* are free from religious ideas. I shall look for a correction in an ensuing issue.—Yours, etc.,

EDMUND J. FORD.

[There may be a few small groups, as mentioned by Mr. Ford, who are not subservient to the Vatican. Our article dealt with currently significant Irish political parties, all of whom are entirely dominated by clerical influence.—EDITOR.]

## DOGMATISM

SIR,—Perhaps most people are dogmatic, and probably it is difficult to get away from it, therefore Mr. R. J. Jackson's article on "Freethought and Dogmatism" is a timely warning for us to watch our step.

Unfortunately, towards the end of his article, Mr. Jackson falls into the same trap of which he has warned us. He gives us the following, as a Buddhist quotation known as the Dhamma: "The starry heavens above and the moral law within." He then continues, "... the good law that shapes existence, leading all life onwards and upwards to its highest goal—enlightenment—which is life's end and aim and this is surely the moral, social and scientific ideal of the religion of the future."

From the word "starry" to the end of the paragraph is nothing but pure dogmatism, and it is also pure nonsense. Let me say at once, there is no moral law in nature, there is no highest goal, Mr. Jackson. And what does life's "end and aim" mean? And how do you know? It seems that you are treading on dangerous ground. How do you define "life's"?

Again, what does "the moral, social and scientific religion of the future" mean? To me it is a jumble of words completely nonsensical. As to the existence of living people, animals and vegetation, it all strikes me as idiotic, but maybe someone can give an intelligent reason for such existence.

"Enlightenment" is mentioned by Mr. Jackson. If enlightenment is an advantage, and I have not got the whole of it, then it becomes stupid, for I can see no valid reason why the person of 10,000 years ago, or any person living to-day, should be deprived of such an advantage, for every person of 10,000 years ago, and every person who has lived from then to now, and every living person, is just as important as persons living 10,000 years hence. If the persons of 10,000 years hence have greater advantages than us then it is just luck; but that does not justify us going short of those advantages now.

Does your moral law, Mr. Jackson, mean that untold billions of people must suffer to give some problematical benefits to some future generations? The only law, if any (of which I doubt), is of one ghastly tragedy after another for most living things.

Let me add the following: "The individual is as important as the mass, the mass is as important as the individual."

Mr. Jackson, you are the most important person in the world to yourself, and that goes for everyone else, for it cannot be otherwise.—Yours, etc.,

P. TURNER.

## A FINAL REPLY

SIR,—I must protest again against Dr. Tabori's quite untruthful charge that I misquoted him. I gave his exact words against—not the "record" of the R.101 case, whatever that is, or where it is to be found—but against the *Sunday Dispatch* version; and if he now says he meant something different, that has nothing to do with me.

I must protest also when he says that I did not go to "first-hand" evidence. I went to Harry Price himself, as Dr. Tabori knows quite well, and Price declared that he did not believe it was Irwin's "discarnate spirit" which was present at the seance. That was all I set out to prove.—Yours, etc.,

H. CUTNER.

[We think it time for this controversy to cease.—EDITOR.]

## OBITUARY

We regret to record the death of Sidney Andrade Hawkins, at the age of 88. He was a loyal member of the Parent Branch of the N.S.S., and only a few days before his end renewed his support for the present year. He was interred in Colchester Cemetery on Monday, January 14, in the presence of relatives and friends, an address being given by Mr. P. Victor Morris, N.S.S. Secretary.

By the death of Wm. Robson at the age of 85, of Cramlington, Northumberland, the North-East has lost one of its oldest and most reliable stalwarts. He was one of the last links with Charles Bradlaugh and his great work in N.E. England. He was one of the best informed men it was possible to meet, and his kindness and friendliness were very marked. He was the centre of a little group who gave years of service to Freethought and N.S.S. At 83 years of age, instead of sitting in an armchair in front of the fire, he commenced a discussion group in his own village. A good attendance, sometimes including local clergy, listened and argued with him, yet he always came out on top. He was an asset to his community, taking an active interest in, and part in, all attempts to enrich his neighbours either physically or mentally. Up till 1951 he still kept up his letters to the Press, and again the quality of his arguments were really splendid. When the correspondence closed, he often invited his opponents to visit him, and made many friends and Freethinkers as a result.

He leaves a son and daughter, who both inherit the fine qualities of their father. Our sympathy goes out to them in their loss. A funeral oration was delivered at the Newcastle Crematorium, according to his wish.

JOHN T. BRIGHTON.

## LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

## OUTDOOR

Kingston-on-Thames Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: J. W. BARKER.

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

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

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

## INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6-45 p.m.: HAROLD DAY (Branch President), "A Freethinker Takes Stock."

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1). Tuesday, January 22, 7 p.m.: Dr. STARK MURRAY, "The Science of Health."

Glasgow Secular Society (McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. ANDREW C. NICHOL, "The History of Navigation."

Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: Mr. M. L. BURNET, "Religion in Schools, What Next?"

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: Prof. V. DE S. PINTO, M.A., D.Phil., "D. H. Lawrence."

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Sunday, January 20, 11 a.m.: Prof. T. H. PEAR, M.A., B.Sc., "Recent Views of Human Motives."

South London Branch N.S.S. (London and Brighton Hotel, Queen's Road, Peckham).—Debate: "That All Religions are Equally False": Affirmative, L. EBURY, Negative, F. A. RIDLEY. PLEASE NOTE: No meeting at the West London Branch.

## CATHOLIC AND NON-CATHOLIC CHRISTIANITY

(Concluded from page 11)

This is proved beyond all doubt if one casts one's mind back to the reception the Bishops gave the doctrine of the Bodily ascension of the Blessed Virgin. It is apparent that they are prepared to accept so much religious nonsense and no more. Already the Pope has done a masterly piece of work for the Freethought movement, by completely antagonising the organised Church of England with his fatuous pronouncements on Fatima, the miracle of the "Dancing Sun" and sundry other absurdities.

The naive idea held by far too many Freethinkers that all members of the clergy are either criminals or fools, most certainly does not apply to the Church of England clergy, and although the present writer believes their opinions to be mistaken, he is capable of understanding to some extent their very real and serious difficulties, and he is of the opinion that, as a body, they would reject entirely any question of submission to the rule of the Pope.

We may, therefore, justly assume that the Church of England is to be included among the non-Catholic group of Christians. It may be to quite a large extent illiberal and even reactionary in a political sense, nevertheless, it is extremely unlikely to become very powerful politically, and may with care of course be disregarded.

It is now necessary to examine the question of the Roman Catholic Church, and examine in some detail the basic difference between Catholic and non-Catholic Christianity.

Whatever Joseph McCabe and others like him may believe, and what is worse teach about, the alleged decay of the Roman Church, the fact still remains that this Church is very far indeed from being politically dead. It is the present writer's opinion that men of the undoubted capacity of a McCabe should make it quite clear to the general reader that their arguments are usually based upon historical comparisons, that is by comparing the strength and power of the medieval Church with that of the present-day church militant. Unless this is made quite clear, Freethinkers and others are induced to accept the fallacy that the Roman Church is no longer to be regarded as a dangerous reactionary political organisation. The Roman Church represents the greatest contemporary danger to liberalism. That is to say, to both physical and intellectual freedom. In accordance with its usual acumen it has extended its frontiers into the fields of medicine, education, and foreign policy. Using the name of religion it is even now challenging birth control, and liberalised divorce laws in every so-called democratic nation. It is not merely advocating certain courses of conduct but is actually directing Catholic doctors, nurses, judges, teachers and legislators in what they can and cannot do in regard to many non-religious phases of the professional conduct. It is supporting in no uncertain terms Catholic Dictators like Franco, Peron and Salazar, who are opposed to everything that free countries profess to value.

Successive Popes have condemned absolutely the cardinal doctrines of Socialism and even now the Roman Church is doing its utmost to force the non-Catholic world into a "holy" war against Communist countries such as Russia. Not—it must be understood—because the Church believes Communism to be wholly bad, but because it perceives in Communism a political system aiming for the rational distribution of goods, which will destroy for ever the system of private ownership of goods and the private ownership of the means of distribution of these goods,

which will end for ever the power of the Roman Catholic Church which, since the rise of Capitalism, has maintained even in *ex cathedra* statements, the absolute rights of private ownership and the principle of the employed and the employer.

Members of the Roman Catholic Church are bound to use all the methods available to them for the complete destruction of Socialism, Communism and Liberalism, and recent history has shown beyond all reasonable doubt that given sufficient civil power, they will attempt, and have attempted, to introduce laws that would destroy all means of self-expression by the individual and thus destroy the freedoms for which so many non-Catholics have fought and died.

It must be clearly understood that one great difference between Catholics and non-Catholics lies in the fact that Catholics are not just citizens of the country in which they happen to live, but are subjects in their own religious commonwealth and that the secular policies of the Church to which they belong as well as the religious policies are made in Rome by an organisation that is alien in spirit to any form of liberalism. The Bishops and priests of this Church although they may be Irish, English or American by birth are, by their very mission, committed to put Catholic loyalties first in all matters in which the Church claims jurisdiction. The Roman Church claims of course, that all matters affecting humanity lies within its jurisdiction. In fact the Church claims that as the supreme and divine arbiter of morals, she alone has the right to define that any political action is sinful and then it falls within the spiritual jurisdiction of the confessional as fully as any infraction of the Decalogue.

It will be seen that however moderately one is inclined to view the actions of the Roman Catholic Church, one and only one conclusion is possible and that is the Church will never be satisfied until it has regained complete temporal (which is political) control over the whole of the civilised world! When in fact, it has secured a return to the days of the Golden Age of the Church. When the priest is the master, the source of all knowledge, and the sole authority on all and every subject. When once again the ideal of absolute dictatorship is attained.

It will be seen that the basic difference between Catholic and non-Catholic Christianity as organisations, is that non-Catholic Christianity is concerned with matters and things *not* of this world. Possibly because none of its organisations have ever held absolute power, and Catholic and Roman Christianity is concerned only with matters and things of this world and uses the weapons of superstition, religion and force to regain world political power.

Freethinkers who value their freedom should at all costs oppose every movement made by or on behalf of the Roman Catholic Church to acquire land, buildings or property of any kind in their country. They should also oppose the appointment of Roman Catholic doctors, nurses, lawyers, judges and others to an official position of any kind. Where they know of such appointments, they should start local agitation for the removal of the appointed person or persons.

(E. W. SHAW).

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