

# THE FREETHINKER

Founded 1881

Editor: F. A. RIDLEY

Vol. LXXII—No. 24

[REGISTERED AT THE GENERAL  
POST OFFICE AS A NEWSPAPER]

Price Fourpence

## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### God's Motherland

FROM ancient times, certain areas on the earth's surface have, for one reason or another, been held to be peculiarly sacred to the Deity, whoever he happened to be at the period in question. Thus Plato, the most religious and, accordingly, the best-known of the philosophers of the ancient world—that "Christian before Christ," as Nietzsche accurately described him—declared that some real or imaginary island in the distant Western Ocean, maybe it was "the Lost Atlantis," was "God's own country." Which flattering description many optimistic modern Americans have applied to the present-day land of "Uncle Sam" and "The Almighty Dollar." Nor, indeed, is this description entirely unwarranted. For many gods have made their reputations in the land of Mrs. Eddy, Joseph Smith, and "Father Divine."

Similarly, at the other end of the world, we had "Holy Russia" before the Bolsheviks took over and Lhasa, the "Holy City" of Tibet before the Chinese took over the other day. Whilst on the other side of Asia, the inhospitable Arabian desert still preserves from the prying eye of modern scepticism the original seat of God's revelation to His holy prophet. One could add many less famous but equally authentic "Holy Places" where gods have made contact with men.

However, all the above occurred in heathen lands: they concerned the gods of the pagans who, as we know, make a speciality of "bowing down before wood and stone." But what about the One True God, the God of Christianity? As is well known, the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity put in an appearance in Palestine some nineteen centuries ago when he passed through the stirring episodes which are recounted for our edification in our Canonical Gospels. Nor, so the Evangelists affirm, was it merely a fleeting visit, here to-day and gone to-morrow, that the Son of God, the Logos, made to this sinful world when, in the expressive words of St. John, he "pitched his tent amongst us." For three years he preached the Gospel, according to the computation of our Gospels.

Perhaps, indeed, for very much longer. For we must not forget that curious and instructive passage in St. Irenaeus (c. 180), where the holy doctor poured scorn on (what is now) the orthodox tradition of the Church and declared that Jesus was nearly fifty when he died and that he had been preaching not for one or for three, but for many years before his death.

Moreover, Irenaeus was emphatic that such was the unanimous tradition of the Early Church and of the Apostles themselves which, if it is true, indicates how little reliance it is possible to place on the present bowdlerised text of the Gospels according to authentic Christian testimony itself.

However, whether aged thirty-three, according to our Gospels, or forty-nine, as St. Irenaeus affirms, it is well known that Jesus finally "softly and silently vanished away" or, in the more pompous language of theology, "He ascended into Heaven and sat down at the right hand

of God the Father," an operation which, incidentally, it is a little difficult to visualise, since God, by theological definition, has no "parts" on which He could presumably sit; an initial difficulty which is enhanced if we accept the opinion of so many modern theologians that Heaven "is a state and not a place"; for, certainly, whilst, no doubt, "all things are possible with God," it seems a trifle difficult to visualise a Being without a body "sitting" on a spiritual "state." However, Faith, which can remove mountains, is surely capable of overcoming this apparent contradiction.

Be that as it may, Jesus Christ vanished from mortal ken and, like the fabled "Snark" in Lewis Carroll's immortal poem, has "never been met with again" either in "The Holy Land," Palestine, or, as far as we know, anywhere else. It is true that he appears every Sunday and at other times in the Holy Eucharist, "whole and perfect in all His parts and including His glorified Body," as the Council of Trent phrased it. But this miraculous reappearance remains—miraculous!—and the Second Person of the Trinity remains invisible to mortal sight.

However, the Faithful have not been left indefinitely to suffer unrequited the mockery of sceptics in this sinful world below, without tangible and visible assurance of "the substance of things hoped for, the assurance of things not seen," as the eloquent writer "To the Hebrews" expresses it. For, if Jesus Christ had remained in Heaven, along with His celestial partners, God the Father and the Holy Ghost, His Blessed Mother, the Virgin Mary, has proved a most efficient deputy and has made the trip from Heaven to Earth (and back) several times, particularly during recent years. There is, of course, no such difficulty in her case as might have occurred in the case of her Divine Son. For the Blessed Mother of God has "parts," including a terrestrial body and has been given, as it were, a theological flying-certificate, testifying that she has already proved capable of making the all-round-the-Cosmos trip when she was miraculously "assumed" in Heaven upon August 15 (A.D.?) the Feast of the Assumption.

It is proverbial that "the first step is the hardest." As this presumably applies to the first flight also, the more recent recurring trips of Our Lady through inter-stellar space, did not probably cause her any serious difficulty. In an age which talks much of "space-travel," this aerial trip of the Mother of God may well prove to be not only heroic, but, equally, of great scientific value. We look forward to the surely not distant date when Our Lady of the Assumption will become the celestial patroness of the "Inter-Planetary Society" and of Space-Travel in general. For no one, not even her Divine Son, surely knows the Earth-to-Heaven route so well as does Our Lady. By now, she must be familiar with every part of a route which she has traversed so often. On the trip through space she is an authority—in fact *the* authority.

The latest and most famous appearance of the Virgin was, as is now common knowledge, at Fatima in Portugal. If Palestine, the ancient "Holy Land," is God's Fatherland, Portugal is the modern Holy Land, God's Mother-

land. As is well known—at least to readers of *The Freethinker*, gods, and the same applies to the females of the species, are Conservative Beings; the Divine style, if we may use the term, runs true to type. Take, for example, the appearance of Jesus at Bethlehem, A.D. One, and that of His Mother at Fatima, A.D. 1917. Both arrived in remote parts of the world far from the current centres of profane civilisations. Both appeared amongst illiterate and superstitious populations long accustomed to the appearance of gods. Both Christ and His Mother appeared to shepherds, always the favourite profession of gods, and both were adored by sheep, which have always represented their most faithful worshippers.

F. A. RIDLEY.

### THE JEWISH SETTLEMENT IN ENGLAND

THE Jewish people were long divided and, to some degree, estranged between the Sephardim and Ashkenazim. The former were those who had resided in Spain and Portugal for some 1,000 years, until their forced conversion to Catholicism or expulsion in the 15th century, while the latter were mainly German and Polish Jews. An important study entitled *The Sephardim of England*, has now been published from the pen of Albert M. Hyamson (Methuen, 1951). Its price is 35s., but it is a handsome volume containing 469 pages, 46 plates, and 7 text illustrations. Also it was published by the authority of the officials of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue to commemorate the opening of that edifice in Bevis Marks in 1701, 250 years previously.

After their expulsion from Spain, many Jews were permitted to remain if they accepted baptism and worshipped as Christians. But even so, their position remained very precarious and, as our historian states, their "choice lay no longer between partial conversion and exile, but between complete renunciation and death at the stake, often the latter fate was imposed without an alternative."

There were migrations to America, where the atrocities of the Inquisition were more mitigated, and to domains where the persecuted people were protected by Dutch and English authority. True it is, that the Jews had been banished from England in 1290, and that it was not until the 17th century that their residence in London was deemed legal. Still, Hebrews on business bent, occasionally appeared in our island during the intervening centuries and a small group of Sephardi dwelt in the metropolis in the reign of Henry VII. Indeed, international, commercial, and industrial undertakings were being conducted by Jews in European cities including Amsterdam and London, while the firm of Mendes had given great satisfaction in financial affairs to the English Government. Thus when, "in 1532, Diogo Mendes, the head of the important Antwerp branch, was threatened with prosecution on the charge of Judaizing, the King of England, Henry VIII, himself intervened and helped to free Mendes from the threat." Yet, later in his reign, religious fanaticism constrained Henry to act, and most of the resident Jews left the country for Holland, then the most tolerant European State.

Jewish residents, however, were soon re-established in England, but those in London and Bristol departed when the Catholic Mary became queen. But under Elizabeth, Marranos, baptised Jews, returned, and Dr. Nunez and his associates conducted business on an extensive scale and their commercial connections with the Continent furnished the English Government with invaluable information concerning Iberian projects. As Hyamson avers: "It

was Nunez who gave Walsingham [Elizabeth's minister] the earliest news of the sailing of the Armada. Nunez and his colleagues occupied under Elizabeth the position that Antonio Carvajal and his associates were to fill later under Oliver Cromwell." Another Jew was the queen's physician, but his enemies accused him of conspiring the murder of his royal patient and, although Elizabeth long hesitated to sign his death warrant, he was executed, but recent research throws grave doubt on his guilt. The trial and sentence stimulated popular prejudice and many Jews sought security in Amsterdam.

After the recognition of the Sephardim community during the Protectorate in 1656, a synagogue was erected in London and a cemetery was leased in Mile End. Under Charles II, Jewish rights were respected and presumably Jewish loans were granted to the Crown. Again, after the flight of James II, English and Dutch Sephardim provided monetary assistance to William III and prayers were offered for his success before he sailed from Holland. But as Hyamson notes: "Of greater practical value perhaps were the services of Machado and Pereira and their representative Francisco de Cordova to whom the provisioning of the expedition was entrusted." William's subsequent Irish campaign was also financed by Sephardi Jews and, for a time, a small Jewish congregation was established in Dublin.

The rites, ceremonies and organisation of the Sephardi communions, especially that in Bevis Marks, are all soberly surveyed. The Sephardi sect was gradually outnumbered by the arrival of Polish and German Jews—the Ashkenazi—who were long looked down upon by the Sephardi congregations. Proselytes were never welcomed and even wedlock between Sephardi and Ashkenazi was reprobated by Sephardi Rabbis. It was only with the settlement in England of wealthy and influential Ashkenazi families, such as the Rothschilds, that the prejudice was swept away. Indeed, the Sephardim constituted a minority of British Jews while many Sephardi had intermarried with Gentiles even in the 18th century, while in the 19th, the originally united Sephardim had become divided by those who were influenced by the mental emancipation of the Gentile world, and the upholders of tradition. The liberal-minded Jews seceded from the rigid orthodoxy of Bevis Marks and an independent West London Synagogue was founded. The seceders addressed conciliatory messages to the old Synagogue Elders, but their overtures were promptly dismissed and bitter antagonism was shown to the dissentients. Ultimately, however, peace was concluded and in 1892 the once reprobated West London Synagogue celebrated its jubilee, when a service was conducted in which all the leading orthodox communions were represented. The Sephardi Synagogue sent its warden, treasurer and secretary. "The Board of Deputies," states our author, "was also represented by its president, Joseph Sebag Montefiore, the nephew and heir of Sir Moses Montefiore, the lay leader in the struggle against the synagogues whose anniversary was being celebrated. Haim Guedalla, one of the heroes of the reconciliation, was also present."

One of the most eminent Jews in the late Georgian and Victorian periods was Moses Montefiore. Strictly considered, he was not a Sephardi, as his ancestral home was Leghorn, in Italy. He became a broker on the London Stock Exchange, and was so successful that he was able to retire with a fortune at the early age of 42. Hyamson observes that: "In the course of his business career, among other activities, he was concerned with Rothschild in raising the loan by which the British Government was

able to emancipate all slaves still remaining in British territory. He was one of the founders of the Alliance Assurance Company and of the Imperial Gas Association, the pioneer of gas lighting on the Continent, of which organisation he remained president until his death. He was also a director of the South-Eastern Railway Company and of the Provincial Bank of Ireland, and had the opportunity, which he declined, of being an original director of the Suez Canal Company."

Within the Jewish community, he also served as an official, while with both Sephardi and Ashkenazi Hebrews his influence was supreme and he was acknowledged by both Jew and Gentile as the most distinguished representative of the "Chosen People." He was the recipient of many honours, both in Britain and abroad, where his public services and acts of benevolence were greatly esteemed. His 98th birthday was celebrated in many parts of the world and, when he died in 1885, at the patriarchal age of 101, his humanitarian deeds were extolled and his personality venerated by Jew and non-Jew, regardless of race or creed.

T. F. PALMER.

### THE LION AND THE LAMB

"MOVE up," said the Lion as it lay down with the Lamb.  
"What are you doing here?" asked the Lamb eyeing the newcomer suspiciously.

"I mean no harm," replied the Lion, "only move up and give me a little more room."

Rather grudgingly the Lamb removed itself a few inches.

"You take up a lot of room for a little 'un," continued the Lion.

"I was here first." The Lamb sounded peeved.

"But I'm so much bigger than you. I need more space to enjoy the sunshine."

The two beasts attempted to settle down together, but the Lamb could not get comfortable and its fidgeting disturbed the Lion. At last the Lion remarked irritably:

"I fear you mistrust me, but I can assure you I am quite peaceful."

"I could place more trust in your peaceful intention if you were to have your teeth drawn and your claws cut."

"That's not fair." The Lion was quite indignant. "It's unreasonable to expect me to go the whole hog all at once. Give me a chance."

"I am quite prepared to give you a chance, but you must allow I have cause to be suspicious of your presence. Give me reason why I should trust you. I am quite willing to do so."

In noble tones, the Lion replied: "I am here to do God's work and fulfil the prophesy concerning us."

"You mean that bit in the Bible about 'the peace that passeth all understanding'?"

"You know very well what I mean. I warn you I will not be laughed at." The Lion's tail twitched angrily.

"Come, come. That's a fine thing to say, to show me how peaceful you are."

"Well, I'm new to the job and I don't suppose you like being laughed at any more than I do."

"I'm sorry," the Lamb apologised. "But I'm new to the job, too. I've never laid down with a Lion before."

Seeking to turn the conversation into safer channels the Lion asked politely: "How do you like it?"

"Well, it's all right as far as it goes," replied the Lamb doubtfully. "But you certainly take up a lot of room."

The Lion was fast losing all patience. The fact that its stomach was upset by an unaccustomed meal of grass did not improve matters. It failed to see why the Lamb

could not quietly accept the situation. It was in the Bible wasn't it? But the Lamb must be made to realise that Lions were much bigger and more important animals than Lambs.

"You don't understand. I'm bigger than you, I need more room. Surely you can see that for yourself? I have no wish to be unreasonable, but . . ."

"I am willing to discuss the matter, but I feel we could argue on more equal terms if your teeth . . ."

"We will discuss the matter of my size first, my teeth afterwards."

"Surely it would be fair if . . ."

"I will not be dictated to by a mere Lamb," growled the Lion.

"I only ask . . ."

These words were drowned by the Lion's roar, and jumping up the Lamb ran off as fast as its legs would carry it.

L. HANGER.

### THEATRE

"After My Fashion." By Diana Morgan. Ambassadors Theatre.

ONE of the main characters in this play has been dead twenty years. We do not see him, but his build-up by the people appearing in the play is so vivid that we have a clear picture of him.

His widow, Lady Starcross, has consented to a film being made of the expedition across a desert in which he and five other men lost their lives. Three more widows give their consent, and everything appears to be running smoothly when Sybil Emerson, who lost a fiancé in the expedition and was also Starcross's mistress, turns up from the South of France. She has been living there in retreat for twenty years, and this is her first visit to England since then. She objects to the film being made, and the play emerges into a duel between her and Lady Starcross.

Sonia Dresdel, who glories in parts of bad women, comes through the rôle of Lady Starcross perfectly. Her acting is a pleasure to watch. Valerie White is the other woman (Sybil), and there is a charming performance by Eileen Moore as the daughter—a young actress who has both brains and good looks. Michael Shepley is very natural as a film producer, and Richard Johnson is convincing as the young film director.

This is one of the best plays to come to the West End recently. It has its minor faults but the authoress is good at her work.

RAYMOND DOUGLAS.

### SHOW BARKER

Whene'er we hear the old, old story,  
We'll hear some mutt yell: "Glory, Glory!"  
Although, like you, the crowd looks bored,  
There's still one bawling: "Praise the Lord!"  
The dismal prospect looming o'er us—  
He swamps with: "Hallelujah Chorus."  
Proud of feeling highly lowly,  
He stands there hooting: "Holy, Holy!"  
When tribulation's prophesied,  
The chump howls: "Lord, with me Abide!"  
As riot's read, from prophet's pen,  
You'll hear him raise a loud "Amen!"  
They're checking up the bob and tanner,  
He drowns the clink with loud "Hosanna!"  
Then, satisfied, the happy sinner—  
Goes home, to damn delightful dinner.

ARTHUR E. CARPENTER.

### ACID DROPS

The man whose name is known to thousands of shoppers with ration cards, David Grieg, died the other day, leaving an enormous fortune and a diary. It appears he never stopped learning, and was always jotting his thoughts down in notebooks. What he had to say about religion would have been of special interest for us—and the sample given by the *Daily Express* we can heartily endorse. He said, "History shows that man has ever sought a God to worship. He has always found one, and a priest to protect and explain it, and a soldier to guard it." How true! Mr. Grieg must have had a thorough contempt for religion to characterise it in this way, and we cannot help wondering what his customers would have done had they known? Perhaps he was right to hide his thoughts in a notebook—for you cannot mix business with irreligion.

One of the latest of the many books on Malthusianism which have appeared during the past years is *The Next Million Years* by the distinguished grandson of Darwin—Sir C. G. Darwin—and it has called forth a characteristic review by (the late) Sir D. MacCarthy in the *Sunday Times*. As a good Roman Catholic he must have found parts of the book distasteful (though he was bound to agree with some), and he carefully avoids referring to birth control. But as Sir Charles is of the opinion that food production will never catch up with population, and this means that at least part of the population will be more or less starving, the reviewer appears to be delighted "that hardship will again compel them (the people) to seek religious consolation."

In those dear old days when the Church was high and mighty, it prided itself on "compelling" people to come into the Church. Those days have gone for ever but, for Sir Desmond, the increasing starvation of the people is obviously a source of great satisfaction, and he describes the passage in which Sir C. G. Darwin points this out "as perhaps the most cheerful passage in the whole essay." How thoroughly characteristic is this pious Roman Catholic!

That hardy annual for clerics known as *Crockford's Clerical Directory* has, in its latest issue, some very unpalatable things to say for the clergy as a whole—including, of course, our bishops. But they all must be rather staggered at the way the Church is no longer attracting the younger men—working for God Almighty on precious little cash not having these days that divine attraction so necessary for a "vocation." Fifty years ago, with two-thirds of our present population, there were actually 10,000 more clergymen in the country than now—an astonishing figure; and the heads of the Church are in consequence profoundly worried.

Moreover, the "cloth" no longer commands the "respect" it formerly received from all ranks of society—except from "infidels"—and it requires a very deep sense of "vocation" to induce any well-educated young man to preach the out-of-date Oriental myths and legends which history and anthropology have shown him to be based on incredible ignorance as "God's truth." As a matter of plain fact, most of them cannot do it; hence the decline in numbers of our clergy. Or, to put it another way, before our very eyes we can see the Church disintegrating.

At an open-air religious meeting held Whit Sunday at Birkenhead with 30,000 people packing the Rugby ground, no fewer than 300 of them fainted. As it was not con-

spicuously hot, and as no reasons are given by the newspaper reports as to why anybody should have fainted at such a holy gathering, we can only conclude that the utter absurdity of the proceedings must have been too much for the only sensible people there, and they promptly lost consciousness, to hear no more of the Fundamentalist twaddle dished out on such occasions.

### SNIPPETS FOR SINNERS

#### ACHIEVEMENT

Happy the man, and happy he alone,  
He who can call to-day his very own.  
He who, secure within, can say  
To-morrow do thy worst, for I have lived to-day.  
Be storm, or calm, or rain, or shine,  
The joys I have possessed in spite of Fate are mine,  
Not Heaven itself upon the past has power,  
But what has been, has been, and I have had my hour.  
—(Dryden.)

#### QUESTION

Where was the soul of Lazarus when his body was in the grave?

How is the soul created in man, when cometh it and how, and in what part is it placed in the body?

Do you agree that all things amongst Christians ought to be in common?—Acts, 4, 32.

—(Henry Smith, a 16th century clergyman.)

#### CONSOLATION

I can only find in the hope that there is Something Beyond—Different Something—Different to Gods or Duty or Human or anything of the kind.

#### IMMORTALITY

As if the petals of the flower, its sensation of warmth were to exist on while its petals decayed.

—(Note Books of Richard Jefferies.)

Compiled by E. A. MACDONALD.

### THE GODS OF PERU

THE old Peruvian world of the gods, indicates clearly how, on a higher stage of evolution, this cult of ancestors or ancestor worship takes definite shape. This applies more particularly, in our illustration, to the Chetschu tribes who lived on the highland of the Cordilleras. Each of those tribes had its tribal and creator-god. These gods were venerated under such names as "creator of all," "the world enlivener," "ruler of the earth," or "world teacher." In most of the individual tribes, however, this supreme god had a special surname and his particular insignia of power. He was conceived of as a special tribal creator. Thus the Incas hailed him as "creator of the Incas," and the Chancas as "creator of the Chancas." Below this god—so his creatures considered—stood the Huacas, the ancestral gods of the phratries and of the gentes or totem groups of which the phratries were made up.

At certain high festivals, as, for example, at the great festival of creation which was held annually in April, on the Huacapata (the terrace of the totem-gods) in Cuzco, children were also sacrificed. The priest of the sacrifice strangled the children, tore the palpitating heart out of the breast, offered it to the creator-god and the four chief Huacas, and then smeared those images from ear to ear with the warm blood.

Peru lay far away from Palestine. But very near, to one another were their religious outlooks and practices.

# "THE FREETHINKER"

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London, W.C.1.

Telephone No.: Holborn 2601.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS

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.

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.

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

## SUGAR PLUMS

From time to time, the propagandists of militant Free-thought receive welcome and valuable supporters from the ranks of the theological army. Many eminent Freethinkers in the past have been former clerics or public advocates of Christianity. Joseph McCabe, ex- "Father Anthony," is an outstanding example. The present Editor of *The Freethinker* also had a theological training and is a Licentiate of Theology (Durham University). The N.S.S. has been fortunate enough to secure, also, the services of several former speakers of the *Catholic Evidence Guild*, who have seen through its "evidence." Mr. E. W. Shaw, an N.S.S. Executive member, is one such, an ex-R.C. Another is a more recent adherent, Mr. Robert Sinclair, now a member of Kingston Branch. Mr. Sinclair made an effective contribution to the recent Streatham debate between Mr. F. A. Ridley and Rev. Dr. J. Crowley (R.C.). He is now a regular speaker on the N.S.S. platform. Last Thursday, he discussed with a group of Catholic students at St. Celia's School, North Cheam, the fundamental question of the existence of God. On Tuesday, June 10, at 2 p.m., Mr. Sinclair, along with that veteran champion of militant atheism, Mr. J. W. Barker, will debate with two representative Christians, at the small public hall, Hill Road, Sutton, Surrey, at 8 p.m., on the theme "Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?" No doubt Mr. Sinclair, of whom we hope to hear more, will not be the last student of Christian "Evidence" to detect its fallacies and go on to accept the Freethought case. More power to his elbow!

We are pleased to note that the Manchester Branch has resumed its summer outdoor activities. The speaker last Sunday was Mr. McCall; to-day (June 15) it is that indefatigable, Mr. J. Clayton. Freethinkers should make a note that the lectures take place at Platt Fields at 3 p.m.

In its Year Book the B.B.C. states that religious broadcasting is intended, amongst other things, to meet the needs of invalids and the aged and infirm, who it describes as "the shut-ins." We happen to know that a number of Freethinkers come into this category, and the Secretary of the N.S.S. would like to hear what they think of B.B.C. solicitude for their spiritual welfare. Letters from them and their friends could provide him with useful ammunition for the fight against the hypocritical and undemocratic policy of religious programmes at present in force at Broadcasting House.

## "THE FREETHINKER" FUND

Donations from Saturday, April 12, 1952, to end of May, 1952:—  
J. Newman, S. Africa, 9s.; R. Burbridge, 6s. 9d.; A. Hancock, 1s.; P. Turner, 10s.; Mrs. M. McCall, 10s.; G. H. Steed, 2s. 6d.; Mrs. Eva Ebury, 2s. 6d.; A. Brooks, 5s.; Peter T. Leckie, 2s.; W. Parry and W. C. Parry, £1 10s.; A. Hancock, 1s.; A. Friend, 10s.; W. J. Howard, 6s.; A. Hayman, 16s.; A. Hancock, 1s.; N. Wray 7s. 4d.; G. Lee, 4s. 6d.; Mrs. A. Vallance, £1; A. Hancock, 1s.; A. R. Wise, 3s.; F. W. Harper, 4s.; C. H. Norman, £2 2s.; Dr. A. Laing, £47 17s.; J. W., 10s.; A. Hancock, 1s.; Members of Sheffield Branch (J. Rawson, 7s. 6d.; E. Lodge, 7s. 6d.; L. H. Lodge, 7s. 6d.; W. Jones, 7s. 6d.; A. Samms, £1), £2 10s.; E. Wright, £1; Fred Muston, 5s.; A. Beale, £1; A. Hancock, 1s.; G. B. Pilling, £3 16s.; C. E. Ratcliffe, 6s.

Total for period: £67 0s. 7d.

Total received to date: £557 15s. 9d.

As mentioned in our issue of May 11, 1952, the Fund will be closed on the 30th of this month.

## THE 87th CONFERENCE OF THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

Leicester—June 1, 1952

WHATEVER else the 87th Conference of the N.S.S. showed, no one who was present could deny its great success and the solid strength of the Secularist Movement. From the moment delegates and members landed at the Secular Hall where they were to receive the generous hospitality and friendship of the Leicester Secular Society, to the inevitable goodbye, the proceedings were marked with that genuine *camaraderie* which has, in the main, characterised our work in what George Meredith called "the best of causes."

The reception organised by the Leicester Secular Society and the cordial welcome of its President, Mr. Kirk, on the evening before the Conference enabled old friends to foregather for a regular pow-wow and meet new ones, and altogether set a splendid atmosphere for the more serious work of the next day.

With Mr. F. A. Ridley in the Chair as Acting President, the Conference opened punctually at 10-30 a.m. Members and delegates filled the tables and listened attentively to the opening remarks of the Chairman who, after regretting the unavoidable absence of Mr. J. T. Brighton, Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner, and others, welcomed those present to the Conference and pointed out that it may well mark a great occasion both for the N.S.S. and the Freethought Movement. After dealing briefly and to the point with our Movement, the Chairman asked the Secretary to read out the names of the delegates from the various Branches, and Mr. Rawson (Sheffield) and Mr. Healy (Chorley) moved and seconded that the minutes of the 1951 Conference be taken as read. This was passed, and Mr. Ridley then read out the Executive's Report, which was enthusiastically adopted. It will be printed and copies sent to all members.

After Mr. Parry (Liverpool) and Mr. Mosley (Nottingham) had moved and seconded the adoption of the Financial Report, the Honorary Treasurer, Mr. Griffiths, explained certain items and it was adopted.

The fourth item on the Agenda was the election of the President on the motion of many of the Branches. Mr. Ebury, one of the Vice-Presidents, took the Chair and gave an interesting account of the work of Mr. F. A. Ridley both as a writer and as a man. Mr. Shaw (South London and Lewisham) proposed and Mr. Billing (Manchester) seconded that Mr. Ridley should be elected the new President of the National Secular Society. In support were excellent speeches by Mrs. Venton and Messrs. Barker, Fraser and Mosley. On Mr. Ridley taking the Chair again, he thanked the Conference, in a witty speech, for electing him and was unanimously acclaimed. The two Vice-Presidents, Mr. Ebury and Mr. Brighton, were

then re-elected on the motion of Mr. Barker (Kingston) and Mr. Fraser (North London).

On the motion of Mr. Page (West London) and Mr. Turner (West Ham), Mr. P. Victor Morris was elected as Secretary; and, following Mr. Barker who proposed, and by Mrs. Venton who seconded, Mr. Griffiths was elected Honorary Treasurer. Both gentlemen suitably thanked the Conference.

On the motion of Mr. Griffiths, seconded by Mrs. Ebury (North London), Mr. Theobald was re-elected as Auditor; and this was followed by a long discussion on the Emergency Motion put forward by the Executive regarding the eligibility of Mr. G. H. Taylor for the Executive. After a number of speeches by many of the delegates and members, it was agreed that mistakes had been made in the past and, as Mr. Taylor could now get the required number of votes from his Branch, he could be elected or co-opted on the Executive.

The next item on the Agenda was the election of the Executive, and Mr. McCall (Manchester) proposed and Mr. Sams (Sheffield) seconded that they be elected *en bloc*. Mrs. Venton, and Messrs. Kenyon, Johnson, Hornibrook, Shaw, Ebury, Tiley and Woodley were then unanimously elected.

Number 10 item on the Agenda dealt with the new Principles and Objects proposed by a special Committee set up by the Executive and printed for the Conference. But before this was discussed the meeting was adjourned for lunch—which was held at the Bell Hotel and proved an excellent one. Fortified by this and the rest afterwards, the Conference settled down to a thorough discussion of some of the items. Many amendments were proffered and agreed upon. No doubt the revision will prove to be a definite step forward and more completely in line with modern ideas. In the discussion, Mrs. Ebury and Mrs. Venton, and Messrs. Ridley, Ebury, McCall, Day, Turner, Kirk, Shaw, Page, Mosley, Woodcock, Smith, Morris and Fraser all took part.

Motion 11 was proposed by Mr. Ridley on behalf of the Executive and seconded by Mr. McCall. It was:—

This Conference desires to record the significant fact that the most influential States of the world, U.S.A., U.S.S.R., China, India, etc. (despite their varied ideologies), all accept the fundamental principle of the Secular State, and calls upon the British people to jettison their present medieval outlook on the relationship of Church and State.

After some excellent discussion, the resolution was passed, as well as Motion 12 which was:—

Deprecating that the present Home Secretary refuses to allow distinguished scientific and other visitors of foreign nationality to enter this country, this Conference calls for the restoration to the British people of the right of free and open discussion on our soil with the citizens of the world, irrespective of nationality, race or creed.

Put forward by Mr. Ebury for the North London Branch, this was unanimously agreed upon.

Motion 13, proposed by the Manchester Branch, and which condemned public grants for sectarian schools and reaffirmed Secular Education, and Motion 14, put forward by Bradford and Manchester and which wanted the B.B.C. to grant Freethought organisations the same facilities it grants the Christian Churches, were dealt with by Mr. McCall who thought that they were superfluous and had already been covered by the Changes in the Aims and Objects. Motion 13 was withdrawn, but Mr. Day (Bradford) proposed Motion 14—he felt that we should press our claims as the B.B.C. was an important organ for religion. Mr. Taylor pointed out that, in five years, ordinary radio might be superseded by television, and suggested that our energies should be concentrated on *visual* science lectures, and uncensored discussions

between Christians and Secularists. The motion was finally agreed upon; after which, Mr. Ridley proposed a hearty vote of thanks to our Leicester friends for their generous hospitality, and Mr. Taylor a vote of thanks to Mr. Ridley as Chairman of the Conference, both of which were unanimously passed. The Conference was then declared closed. It had been an excellent one in every way, and was bound to have an important influence on the future of the Society.

The evening Demonstration brought a "full house," and Mr. F. A. Ridley was heartily greeted as he led the way, with his troupe of speakers, on to the platform. The Secular Hall in Leicester has a fine Freethought tradition behind it, for most of the great Freethought writers and lecturers of the last 100 years have spoken from its platform. The Leicester Secular Society held its first meeting in 1853 and operated continuously from 1861. The present Hall was first opened in 1884.

Mr. Ridley opened the proceedings with an excellent résumé of Secularism and Freethought, and he was followed by another from a different angle, also a fine exposition, by Mr. Kirk, the President of the Leicester Secular Society. Then came Mr. Clayton, one of the best known of our regular lecturers, especially in the North, who brilliantly analysed the modern craze of "faith healing." He proved that phials of "holy" water and plain water were equally efficacious in healing—without "faith." Mr. Day followed, and his dry humour was much appreciated. One of the "gems" of the evening was the "anonymous" poem read out by Mr. Morris which devastatingly dealt with the religious twaddle dished out every morning by the B.B.C. The audience had no difficulty in guessing the author—and in response to numerous requests it will appear in these columns. Then followed Messrs. Mosley and Ebury, both at their best, and with Mr. Ridley adding a final word this closed a most successful Demonstration thoroughly enjoyed by an appreciative audience. According to Mr. Kirk it was the best public meeting held there for many years.

For Whit Monday, our Leicester friends arranged a successful coach excursion into the country. Among sights visited were Bradgate Park and a Monastery—the latter no doubt as a necessary corrective to our Secularism. Altogether it proved a most entertaining trip.

This concluded a particularly delightful Conference—one of the best of recent years. A word must be added in praise of the many helpers gathered by the Leicester Secular Society under Mr. Kirk and Mrs. Vernon, who all did their utmost to make our stay there a memorable and most happy one. To them all we owe our grateful thanks.

H. C.

#### GOD AND MAMMON

"A priest appealed in a Bromley, Kent, pulpit yesterday for missing football pool prizewinners—including a first dividend winner of £21.

"The 'weekly members only' pool is run by a group of Kent Catholic Churches.

"The Rev. Fr. Edmund Grady told his congregation at St. Joseph's, Bromley: 'It really astonishes me, people who have won the money don't come forward to claim it.'

"After mass, ticket-holders clustered round the 'missing' list on the church notice board, searching their pockets and handbags for old tickets. Afterwards three £1 prizes were claimed, leaving £28."  
—Daily Express, 29th April, 1952.

**THE CRUCIFIXION AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS.**  
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## CORRESPONDENCE

## RELIGION AND THE B.B.C.

[The following is a copy of a letter sent by our correspondent to the B.B.C.—EDITOR.]

May 17, 1952.

SIR,—I only hope that one of the hitherto most enjoyable B.B.C. programmes, "Any Questions?" is not doomed—as others have been—to be turned into so much dead wood by the intrusion of a cleric into the team of speakers. Directly F. Grisewood announced a Canon as being of the team, my heart sank; and justifiably. The dog-collar inevitably suffused the whole programme with that nauseating piety—not to say dullness—which has understandably emptied the churches.

"God . . . in your prayers . . . this is dead serious . . ." pulpit-tinged Canon Darling yesterday evening over the ether, in answer to a question; and R. Wightman and Major Hastings were almost as bad. William Pickles was the one speaker who saved "Any Questions?" from being entirely blanketed by pious fustiness.

Have not these clerics enough of the B.B.C. ether already given to them? (And, of course, without a thought of "Thank you" from them.) "This is no longer a Christian country," we are told; and "only 15 per cent. of the people attend church." Yet arrogantly clerics claim the right to the B.B.C. "mike" for long hours every week. Now "Any Questions," apparently, is going to be spoilt—for it will be spoilt—by the presence of that self-righteousness so seriously "laid upon" the shoulders of every gentleman called to a "stipend."

Consider for a moment the complete ridiculousness of what came over the ether from last Friday's "Any Questions?" (*sic*):—

Canon Darling: "If only (you keen) church-going Christians were as keen on your religion as are the Communists on their Communism, Christianity would soon sweep this country off its feet."

Major Hastings (with his customary passionate fervency): "Russia is the cobra, and justly deserves to be treated as such!"

R. Wightman to Canon Darling: "We want to see more Christian fervour and keenness among the clergy. We look to you to lead us, sir."

So, the reverend sir advocates Communistic keenness; which the Christian Major designates as that of the cobra; which Christian R. Wightman asks to be led by. Here, a welcome glint of sanity came from a remark made by William Pickles.

Well may empty churches be echoing with the question, "Christianity, what is thy real name?"—Yours, etc.,

ELIZABETH MILLARD.

## CHRISTIANITY

SIR,—Having read Mr. McKeown's contribution in *The Freethinker* and his offer to introduce me to several Christians, I should like to avail myself of his generosity. I take it his invitation applies to any person. Never having personally met one, nor having any idea what type of people they might be, you will appreciate my interest. Naturally, I do not wish to meet those who claim allegiance to any religion; I want to meet those who follow out the teachings of the New Testament. For instance, can I meet some who hate their father, mother, sister, wife; yea, even their own selves, according to the gospels.

To meet those who have no "ration books," relying on the statement, take no thought for the morrow, what ye shall eat, etc., your heavenly father will provide all these. Those who forsake "all" for the master's sake. And, of course, those who have such faith they can remove mountains, handle rattlesnakes, and drink poison and it shall not harm them.

I am prepared to meet any, regardless of expense.—Yours, etc.,  
A. MICHAEL.

## DOGMATISM AND FREETHOUGHT

SIR,—Mr. P. Turner, in your issue of date, asks: "Can it be shown that life is not idiotic?" I do not think it can, conclusively, as we do not know whether it is, or not. On such a subject we only know what we happen to think about it. What we *think* in this connection is what we *believe*.

Thus, Freethinkers have their beliefs and should avoid the dogmatic attitude of religious folk who confuse beliefs with knowledge, wrongly assuming they know God's nature, will, purpose, and even sex.

Should Freethinkers or others dogmatise respecting Whence? Why? or Whither? What do we really *know* re Origin, Purpose, or Destiny?—Yours, etc.,  
C. E. RATCLIFFE.

## HUMAN SOCIETY

SIR,—The truism that Man is a member of the animal kingdom becomes a dangerous fallacy when they are equated and Man's unique position is lost sight of. Your correspondent, Airey, cannot compare the human species with "frogs, or rabbits, or blue-bottles," and the "birth rate and mortality rate of the rabbit population" is not a self-regulated lever to maintain a more or less even number of best specimens.

All animals are inescapably interlocked in the "food chain," with certain types preying and feeding upon others; Man is the only specimen that has been able to extricate himself from this chain and become its ultimate master. He is in no way exposed to the mercies of Nature, he himself acts upon Nature, weathers catastrophes, cures diseases, produces wealth and surplus so that he is able to burden society with the maintenance of socially less desirable specimens: mental defectives may still be good for soldiery, physically defectives may be spiritual giants. Where else in the animal realm come mental considerations into their own?

These are only a few points at random to show that human society is something quite apart and must not be compared, not even to the Insect State. (Man's work is preconceived, he can break traditions and make inventions).

Man alone is able to exercise Birth Control deliberately, apart from natural factors. It is no ideal solution, as it does not deal with the root evil, viz., a social build-up that is no longer in agreement with individual needs. The only real solution is a new pattern of society where no longer unemployment and wars are looked upon as birth rate regulators.—Yours, etc.,

PERCY G. ROY.

## N.S.S. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE,

June 5, 1952

Present: The President, F. A. Ridley (in the chair), Mrs. Venton, Messrs. Griffiths, Kenyon, Johnson, Hornibrook, Tiley, Shaw, Ebury, Woodley, Cleaver, Corstorphine, Barker, and the Secretary. New members were admitted to the Parent and Manchester Branches. The Secretary was instructed to write to the Leicester Secular Society expressing the gratitude of the N.S.S. for the splendid arrangements made in Leicester, that had contributed so greatly to the very successful Conference. He reported that the printing of the Annual Report and of new Membership Forms (bearing the revised Principles and Objects, etc.) was in hand; also that Motions passed at the Conference were being brought to the notice of parties concerned.

He suggested the engagement as Office Clerk of Mrs. R. Seibert, widow of the late Secretary, to free him for more constructive work, and this was agreed to for a trial period.

In view of the fact that several speakers at the Conference had expressed a desire to see Mr. G. H. Taylor on the Executive Committee, it was agreed to co-opt his services; also those of Mr. A. S. Gibbins, who had given good service during the latter months of the year just ended. Last year's Benevolent Fund Committee, Messrs. Griffiths and Barker, with Mrs. Venton, was re-elected. An invitation from the Ethical Union for the N.S.S. to participate in the First International Congress on Humanism and Ethical Culture in Amsterdam, August 21-26, was placed before the meeting. This, it was noted, had been fixed for the same time as the Brussels Congress of the World Union of Freethinkers, at which our President would be present, and the Secretary was instructed to reply pointing this out.

P. VICTOR MORRIS, Secretary, N.S.S.

## LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

## OUTDOOR

Blackburn Branch N.S.S.—J. CLAYTON, Friday, June 13, 7-30 p.m., Crawshawbooth; Sunday, June 15, 7-30 p.m., Padiham; Monday, June 16, 7-30 p.m., Cliviger; Thursday, June 19, 7-30 p.m., Scoutbottom (Rossendale).

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Every Sunday evening, 7 p.m.: H. DAY.

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. A lecture. Sunday, June 15 (Platt Fields), 3 p.m.: J. CLAYTON.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, 12 noon: G. STEED and F. A. RIDLEY (Highbury Corner).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Saturday, May 24, 7 p.m.: A. ELSMERE and T. M. MOSLEY.

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

West London Branch N.S.S. (Hyde Park, Marble Arch).—Sunday, 4 p.m.: Messrs. WOOD and O'NEILL.

South London and Lewisham Branch N.S.S. (Brockwell Park).—7 p.m.: L. EBURY.

## INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, June 15, 11 a.m.: ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON, M.A., "Some Critics of Freud."

## ST. PETER AND PAGANISM

*(Concluded from page 184)*

TRADITIONALLY, the constellations of fire and water, or the points of Summer and Winter solstice are *leo* and *aquarius* respectively, the latter being called "The Man" (cf. Andrew, Simon-Petrus's brother). All life comes forth from water as the New Light is born and reborn in the Winter Solstice; hence, the "Man" is the father and Jesus is called "The Son of Man.")

All heavenly bodies, and the constellations of the Zodiac in particular, were thought of as animated stones heaped up in circles (Stonehenge) and performing a round dance. Sacred fire was struck from flint, thus the new life was born in the dark cave; men come from rock (Jes. 51, 1-2) and a first couple, Deukalion and Pyrrha (Fire) sow stones and reap men, after a generation had been drowned in the Great Flood. Stones (in phallic form) were anointed and used as altars; out of rock Moses (another II, together with Aaron and Mirjam) strikes life-giving water. The Ka'aba stone of Mecca was pure white when it fell from heaven, but it grew black from the touch of sinful men; around it Abraham with the aid of his son Ishmael (same root as Shimeon) built a shrine, Beith-Allah (House of God), cf. Jacob's Beth-el (Bethuel, father of Laban, was a son of Abraham) in remembrance of his dream of the planetary angels going up and down a ladder. Zecharia, representant of II among the "Smaller Prophets," sees a Stone with 7 Eyes (iii, 9). The spheric music for their dance is provided by twins such as Apollon, Orpheus, etc.

As Jesus' doublet, Peter as the head of the Apostles (messengers) is the Stone or Rock *par excellence*; this explains why his name of Simeon (God's Messenger) is first changed into Cephas, aramaic Kîphâ=rock, which, in turn, is translated into Greek Pétros (Matthew xvi, 18), which couldn't have been a name befitting a human being.

The sign of *gemini* is a constellation in the "upper" zodiac of light and wind, the pneuma-heaven; its place in the water-heavens is taken by *pisces*, the fish-twin. Peter, the "fisherman of men" is the son of Jonah, the fish-man in particular. Jônâh=the Dove (of the virgin), as a "prophet," was sent with a message of Jahve to the town of Niniveh, the inhabitants of which were of no concern to Him; yet, Niniveh, or Nin-ua=Fish-House, was the cult centre of a virgin goddess whose attributes were fish and dove.

About the time when the Gospels were concocted the Vernal Equinox moved into *pisces*; hence Peter is The Rock; he rows his boat—the Sun Barge—on Lake Genesareth, being a symbol for the ship of the Ecclesia (cf. boat symbols, such as the church nave).

Every II-god is a Borderer; it was in the border *marches* that the first negotiators met and set apart the sacred area of the *market* (merx, Mercurius=Mercury). Stones were set up as sacred landmarks (cf. Gen. 28, 18; Deut. 19, 14; 27, 17) for boundary demarcation; where crossways meets, people had the duty of depositing, as a sacrifice, stones, called Mercus images, or Thermulæ (for Hermes). In a wider sense, the II-god is the borderer between the realms of Day and Night, his colour is black-white, his biform symbol is the cock so foremost in the Peter fable; and, hence, his cuneiform name of Nebo, or Nabû=the Announcer (of Daybreak), Shimeon. He is the messenger, the liason officer between light and darkness, upper world and netherworld, who guides the souls to Hades (as Psychompos). Peter is the guardian of the Gates of Heaven, as such he keeps the keys to the Weather Stores;

his weathercock is a totem to protect the building from "thunderbolts" and all days connected with Peter-Paul—such as January 25th, February 22nd, June 29th—are considered ominous for the way the weather and crops will turn out.

Peter was associated with doorways and in the practical expedients necessary in guarding gates and threshold: IANUA = threshold. In the later republic period one face of the image looked towards East (morning, entrance), the other towards West (night, way out), hence he knew past and future; he had the powers to bind and to loose (the bars of the earth, cf. Jonah ii, 6) and had the epithets of Patulcius = Opener, and Clusius = Locker, in prayers he was addressed as Pater = Father, i.e., Pope.

The cock, as the herald of dawn, puts with his crowing the demons to flight and has its significance as an apotropæic being (Hamlet, I, 1/1595); in Vendidad 18, 14ff, the cock is called the bird Parôdarsh=foreseer (of dawn); every morning it wakens man reminding him to defy the demons and pray to Ormuzd. Cock sacrifices were thought efficient to unlock locked doors (cf. Lucian., Somnium, 28f.).

The housewife carries her keys quite symbolically as the ruler in her domestic kingdom; in the case of divorce they had to be surrendered. Heaven and afterworld were thought to be regions or abodes with doors and gates; these doors had bars and bolts as well as locks (Job, 17, 16; 38, 10; Jonah 2, 6; Rev. 1, 8; 9, 20). The guardian deity, called *claviger*, key-bearer, opens in the morning the gates for the day and shuts them in the evening after the sunset. The same applies to the afterworld, the realm of the dead, where the gates are guarded (Hekate, the Lady of Hades; Michael in 3, Bar. 11, 2). Peter can open or shut the entrance to heaven; he "shall open, and none shall shut and he shall shut, and none shall open" (Is. 22, 22).

By having been given the power "to bind and to loose," in the terms of the Talmuds, Peter is declared to be a competent Rabbi whose decisions in matters of conduct would be ratified by the Heavenly Tribunal. The power of the keys, equally with that of binding (i.e., to forbid) and loosing (i.e., to permit), belonged to the office of scribe and teacher; the former, when admitted to office, received the symbolical "Key of Knowledge" (Lk. 11, 52).

Finally, the divine key-bearer was identified with the steward of God's House on earth, given the power to open or shut the Porta Sacra; he is infallible, since "with respect to everything which he shall ordain in the earth, it shall be decreed in the heavens" (Clem., Hom. ad Jac. 11).

It should be borne in mind that religion and astrology have always been twin brothers. Pope Julius II fixed the day of his enthronement according to the findings of horoscopy; Popes Innocent II, Sylvester II, and others kept their Court Astrologers and gave them professorial chairs in their universities. Thomas Aquinas, in his *Summa Theologiae*, declared that it was quite in line with religion to predict future events from star constellations, and the Council of Trent (1545-63) sanctioned the practice of astrology as the proper reading of the Book of Heavens. Consequently astrological superstitions are at the bottom of all sacred stories and their knowledge is indispensable for the understanding of religious notions.

PERCY G. ROY.