

THE FREETHINKER

Founded 1881

Editor: F. A. RIDLEY

Vol. LXXII—No. 39

[REGISTERED AT THE GENERAL
POST OFFICE AS A NEWSPAPER]

Price Fourpence

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Life on Other Worlds

THE great historian, James Anthony Froude, whilst still an Anglican clergyman and a disciple of Newman, ended his *Life of St. Neot* upon a cautious note of mild scepticism:—

“Such,” he summed up, “is all, and rather more than all, that is known to men about the Blessed St. Neot, but not more than is known to the angels in Heaven.”

When we turn to the Universe, to the Cosmos, and compare what, respectively, theology and science have to tell us about it, one is reminded at once of Froude’s cautious conclusion about the miracle-strewn career of his legendary Cornish saint. All that mankind knows at present about the Universe in which he dwells, is contained in the cautious and tentative conclusions of modern astronomy. In comparison with the illimitable unknown, the actual knowledge of science is, and presumably always will be brief and fragmentary: for it is and, again, presumably always will be true that, as the great Sir Isaac Newton is said to have once observed: “Compared with what *is* in its totality, the utmost knowledge of Humanity must always resemble that of a child picking up pebbles on the sea-shore.”

With theology, however, the case is different. Very different! For, as we have already noted in this column, the problems of inter-planetary existence present no mysteries to the theologian. The spiritual state, at least, of the hypothetical dwellers in other worlds, even if not their physical shapes, has already been fully classified. Here, as so often in the past, the “knowledge” possessed by theology far surpasses the actual knowledge possessed by science.

However, before there can be in the Universe any such thing as “original sin,” there must be living beings to possess it. Upon that point, at least, both the scientist and theologian can agree. Before, accordingly, we start speculating upon the nature, spiritual or physical, of those inhabitants of other worlds, it might be desirable to inquire what are the actual possibilities of life on other worlds? And this, we submit, is a problem for scientists rather than for theologians. It is, at all times, a fascinating problem, particularly at this present juncture, when humanity has, at long last, acquired access to the air, and is so rapidly increasing his mastery over it that prospects of inter-planetary communication are now, perhaps, passing out of the province of wild “scientific” fiction into the more prosaic realm of sober engineering possibility.

Leaving the physical make-up of our hypothetical fellow-citizens of the Solar System to their eventual explorers, and their spiritual state to Fr. Connell and his fellow theologians, it may be as well to confine our modest inquiries to the preliminary problem: Does life exist on other planets?

An illuminating and authoritative discussion of the whole subject by the Astronomer Royal, Sir Harold Spencer Jones, has just been reissued, *Life On Other Worlds*—originally published in 1940. Dr. Spencer Jones discusses the whole problem of the origin and possibilities of the

existence of life in the Universe in general and in our own solar system, in particular. Dr. Jones discusses the whole problem objectively, like a genuine scientist. One finds in *Life On Other Worlds* none of that proselytising zeal which marks the publications of the “inter-planetary society,” which, to the recurring refrain of “we’ll never know until we get there,” elevates inter-planetary flight almost to the level of a messianic apocalypse. But then, we do not suppose that the Astronomer Royal proposes to leave Her Majesty in astronomic ignorance whilst he careers round the solar system in the first “space ship” to set out on the great adventure of inter-planetary travel. Sir Harold is probably getting past the age when such adventures appeal; and, anyway, he can always see the stars in comfort from Greenwich Observatory.

Our author’s conclusions may be briefly summarised: in a rather technical preliminary analysis he investigates the primary factors necessary for the appearance and maintenance of life in general, both as we know it here and as we may suppose that it exists elsewhere. There must, for example, be atmosphere, but not too much of it. This rules out life in the great majority of our planetary fellow-travellers and in their encircling satellites.

Our moon, for example, has long ago lost any atmosphere that it may once have possessed. Sir Harold evidently agrees with the classical lunar definition of the American astronomer, Simon Newcomb: “The moon is a world without weather on which nothing ever happens.” Our author’s own description is even more sombre: “It is a world” he writes, “that is completely and utterly dead, a sterile mountainous waste on which during the heat of the day the sun blazes down with relentless fury, but where during the long night the cold is so intense that it far surpasses anything ever experienced on the Earth.” So much for the “queen of night,” the “silvery moon” of poetic rhapsody. Clearly, science contradicts poetry no less than it does theology!

Incidentally, whilst not definitely declaring lunar exploration to be impossible, *per se*, the Astronomer Royal emphasises the tremendous difficulties which would accompany it. Even if a landing could be made on our satellite, the explorers’ troubles would only have begun: meteorites would rain down from the skies upon the surface unprotected by any atmosphere. Heat and cold would be incredible as and when judged by earthly standards. The difficulties encountered by the would-be conquerors of Mt. Everest would be trivial in comparison. Intending passengers in lunar space ships, beware! As for life on the moon, it seems out of the question. “The man in the moon,” like the romantic moon of the poets, is pure fiction.

As for the rest, Mercury, the sun’s nearest neighbour, only turns one face to the sun—with results of heat and cold, respectively, which make life impossible. Whilst as for the giant outer planets, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune, they are far too cold, besides being crushed beneath atmospheric weight. Dr. Jones describes them as “these dreary, remote, frozen wastes of the solar system.” As, between them, Jupiter et cie constitute some-

thing over 99.9 per cent. of the solid part of the planetary system, this does not seem to convey much support for the "design" argument, nor afford much help for the hard-pressed "apologetics" of "The Christian Evidence Society."

In only two planets, Mars and Venus, our nearest neighbours in space, does the Astronomer Royal find any serious prospects of intelligent life. In Mars, vegetable life alternates with dreary deserts—to be sure, the "Red Planet" has been elsewhere described as a "planetary Tibet" and intelligent life *may* still exist there. But, if so, it is soon doomed to extinction, on account of the drying up of its water supply. Indeed, our author calls Mars, "the planet of spent life," and suggests that Mars actually is where our planet will be in some, fortunately, still remote era in the future. Venus, contrarily, he contends, is still where the Earth was in the remote past. It, too, *may* become the home of life in the remote future.

So much for *our* planetary system. What of the rest of the illimitable universe? Here, the Astronomer Royal is still more cautious and tentative in his conclusion. We can hardly ever hope to see the planets of the other suns (stars) on account of their incredible distances. But there is some reason to think that *some* stars have planetary systems, and that *some* of these may be the abode of life. It is most unlikely, as far as other stars are concerned, that we shall ever be in a position to say more than this.

Dr. Jones writes like a scientist throughout. Unlike his younger colleague, Fred Hoyle, he does not attack Christianity or theism directly. After all, he is the Astronomer Royal to "The Defender of the Faith"! But it appears that he has little use for the theistic hypothesis and makes, as far as we noted, absolutely no reference to it. We think that all our readers will agree with this dictum: "If this conclusion is accepted, it follows that life does not occur as the result of a special act of creation or because of some unique accident, but that it is the result of the occurrence of definite processes; given the suitable conditions, these processes will inevitably lead to the development of life."

Our author concludes that "life elsewhere in the Universe is the exception and not the rule."

F. A. RIDLEY.

HISTORY OF THE FREETHOUGHT MOVEMENT IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

THE only class of population still speaking Czech in the second half of the 18th century were illiterate or half-illiterate Catholic peasants in most areas of central Bohemia and Moravia and a part of Silesia. The towns and aristocracy were also Catholic and spoke mostly German. The "rebirth" and later progress of the Czech nation in the 19th century were characterised not only by strengthening opposition of the rising Czech intelligentsia against German speaking rulers, but also by a tendency reflected in the slogan "Away from Rome."

In 1781 the enlightened Emperor Joseph II issued the Patent of Toleration which led among the Czechs to 70,000 open conversions or reconversions to reformed Churches, mostly in remote rural districts. This was due to the fact that the country had been Catholicised by force only in and after the Thirty Years' War which was concluded by the peace treaty of 1648, so fatal for the Czech nation. The Romantic Movement with its interest in the past resulted in deeper knowledge of Czech history including the Hussite and Protestant Reformations in the 15th and 16th centuries which also fostered the reappearance of Protestant spirit. On the other hand, the influence of certain Western rationalist thinkers (e.g., apart from

German Rationalists, Voltaire, later also A. Comte and H. Spencer), the progress of positive scientific knowledge and its spreading among wider and wider numbers of people, which tendency was the heritage of the enlightened 18th century, led many outstanding personalities of the nation, usually of humble social origins, to deism, various forms of agnosticism or atheism. The Roman Catholic Church not tolerating, as a rule, deviationists among their members, many of these people left secretly or even openly Christianity altogether. This was fostered by the improved material conditions and legal status of the peasants and by the, for that time, remarkably democratic school system, enabling—especially after the reforms following the defeat of Austria from Prussia in 1866—intelligent members of all classes to reach the highest academic distinctions and providing for everyone else a certain minimum of knowledge. Political Catholicism, however, frequently and not always unsuccessfully attempted to obstruct or curtail it. The heaviest burden of the struggle for culture against the Church was borne by Czech teachers of all categories, led to antagonism between the school and the Church and has shown clearly the superiority of secular ideas over clericalism. A Free School Movement, based on Western and Tolstoi's ideas, started among Czech teachers in the eighties of the 19th century and was later integrated with Freethought Movement. The rising of Protestantism and secularism was, of course, connected with persecution, especially of the latter, by the powerful Catholic part of the public and by the authorities. Not only were Catholics unsuccessful in their attempts to break opposition at home, but driving many into exile in U.S.A., they caused the non-Catholic element among the Czechs in America to be very strong (50 per cent. or more) and thus fatal to Austria-Hungary in the First War.

Among the numerous precursors of the Czech Freethought Movement let us mention four. Bernard Bolzano (1781-1848) was a Catholic priest and professor of Prague University which he had to leave because of his liberal and rationalist opinions. Karel Havlíček (1821-56), a great writer, founder of Czech journalism and one of the leaders of a revolution which almost overthrew the Austrian Empire in 1848-49, is the author of lines like "There is no God and the Emperor should not be" or "Our Lord is himself the first atheist" and of the excellent satirical epos "The Conversion of St. Vladimir" (English translation by Ernst Altschul, Cleveland, Ohio, 1930). Although in his own words he preferred to live and to work for truth and not to die for it as had been common in former times, he also became a victim of reaction. He was exiled and interned in Tyrol where his health deteriorated so that he died shortly after returning home. The Freethinkers named later after him one of their periodicals. Alfons Ferdinand Stastny (1831-1913), the Farmer-Philosopher, "Father of Czech Agrarian Movement," left the Church in 1869. He founded the Friends of Freedom of Conscience preshadowing later Freethought organisations, Augustin Smetana (1814-51), a Catholic monk and University lecturer, was a thinker whose humanitarian philosophy shows strong social colouring. He left the Catholic Church in 1849. The first Freethought organisation, founded in Bohemia in 1904, bore Smetana's name. Two years later the name was changed into "Czech Section of Freethought." A prominent personality among the founders of the Movement was the editor Karel Pelant (1874-1925). The Prague Congress in 1907 was the first great event of the movement. In this Congress there participated, among others, also the representatives of American Czech Freethinkers who, though they had been organised before, founded their League only in that year.

In 1915—the 500th anniversary of the burning in Constance of the Czech reformer Jan Hus—the Austrian authorities prohibited Freethinkers' organisation, which was renewed only after the War in 1919 in the independent State of Czechoslovakia. It was not broken by the prohibition, the best proof being the success of the eighteenth Congress in Prague in 1920.

Many Czech Freethinkers, particularly students of Prague University, belonged before the First War to a progressive party an M.P. for which was T. G. Masaryk, later first President of Czechoslovakia. Towards the end of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th centuries the Progressive Movement counted among its collaborators many of the best writers and thinkers who introduced to the Czechs best foreign authors, founded and published several periodicals, raised the general standard of education and fought for the emancipation of women. Also many of the founders and original leaders of the Social Democrats and Agrarians and certain leaders of other parties were Freethinkers. Both first Presidents of Czechoslovakia were closely connected with the movement and worked for it. T. G. Masaryk (1850-1937) studied some of the precursors of Czech Freethought Movement, lectured and wrote about them. In 1905 he lectured in the Freethought organisation "Augustin Smetana" in Prague on which his publication "Survey of the Latest Philosophy of Religion" was founded. In 1906 he gave a lecture at a meeting which was dismissed by the police and Masaryk was prosecuted by 308 teachers of Catholic religious instruction on the ground that he had offended them by referring to them as "denouncers." Another charge later was "offence to religion" but Masaryk was acquitted on both. In 1906 Masaryk defended his religious views with other progressive speakers at a public discussion at Hradec Králové. During his visits to America he used to lecture to Freethinkers there. In the Austrian Parliament he advocated the radical separation of the Church from the State including the complete laicisation of schools. Edvard Benes (1884-1948), the second President, was before the First War a contributor of the periodical *Volná Myslenka*, the organ of Czech Freethinkers. He translated into Czech Volney's *Ruins*, and in 1908 published his study on *Free-thought, Socialism and Social Democracy*. Their fight in exile in the First War against Austria-Hungary which they held for a backward theocratic State was supported at the beginning largely by the money collected in America by the leader of Czech Freethinkers there, E. V. Voska, Prof. Frantisek Krejci, evolutionary positivist thinker of Spencer's type, represents a link between Freethought and this leading school in Czech philosophy. With Prof. Frantisek Drtina, Masaryk's collaborator in his political party, and Masaryk himself he formed the new democratic and secular Czechoslovak school. There is hardly a member of the teaching profession or intelligentsia in general whose philosophic background was not formed or influenced by at least one of these three or some of their disciples.

ARTHUR WILD.

(To be concluded)

THE FAITH OF THE BAPTISTS

If any reader of this journal imagines for a moment that there is very much difference between any of the Christian sects, let him study what the Baptists say about what they believe given below. Of course the Pope's name does not occur, but apart from that, we doubt if there is anything in this "creed" which Roman Catholics would oppose.

These "Articles of Faith" are taken from the

prospectus of the Baptist Bible Seminary and Baptist Bible institute of Johnson City, New York (1952-53), and all students are taught unquestioning obedience. They are also taught that "a divine commission" marks their institution as recorded in 2 Timothy 2, 2. For them the Bible is truly the Word, Divinely Inspired—every dot and comma in the Authorised Version, that is. The Bible in English has always to be their war cry.

Needless to say, the course which students have to take not only includes theology but also all about the Bible and apologetics. As Baptists believe in "Creation," they oppose Evolution, and students are grounded in opposition to Evolution. Whether any fully-trained student could hold his own with a Freethinker is another matter.

Baptists believe in the "personal existence of angels, demons and Satan" and naturally in Hell. They also believe "in the punishment of all unbelievers"—which is always considered quite right by earnest Christians. It would be intolerable if blatant infidels could get away with it. But here is the—

ABRIDGED STATEMENT OF OUR ARTICLES OF FAITH WE BELIEVE:

In the Trinity of the Godhead; one God eternally existing in three Persons—Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

In the verbal and plenary inspiration of the Bible, which is the inerrant Word of God.

In the direct creation of the universe and man by God apart from any process of evolution.

In the deity, virgin birth, sinless life, substitutionary death, bodily resurrection, and imminent, premillennial coming of Christ.

In the fall, depravity and guilt of the race in Adam.

In the personality of the Holy Spirit by Whom believers are called, regenerated, baptized into Christ, indwelt, sealed, and filled for service.

In the eternal salvation of all born-again believers in Christ whose blood was shed for the remission of sins.

In the unity of all true believers in the Church which is the body of Christ.

In the local church as a company of baptized believers, independent and self-governing, which should be in fellowship with other churches of like faith and order. It is the responsibility of the local church to observe the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, edify itself, and evangelize the world. We teach baptism by immersion, for believers only, as a prerequisite for church membership.

In the obedience to the biblical command to separate entirely from worldliness and ecclesiastical apostacy unto God.

In the personal existence of angels, demons and Satan.

In the bodily resurrection, immortality and rapture of all believers at Christ's coming.

In the bodily resurrection and judgment of unbelievers after the millennial reign of Christ.

In the eternal life and blessedness of all believers and the eternal existence and punishment of all unbelievers.

And to think in the face of this, that there are still people, mostly reverent Rationalists, who insist, Freethought has won all along the line!

H. C.

NICHEVO

Seek no one out,

Let others seek out you;

And do not shout

Your virtues—maybe few.

Careless, wait fame—

More, much more, likely blame,

With nonchalance

Watching this old world dance.

B. S.

THE CRUCIFIXION AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

By W. A. Campbell. With a Preface by the Rt. Hon. J. M. Robertson. Price 2s. 6d.; postage 2d.

DETERMINISM OR FREEWILL? By Chapman Cohen.

Price, cloth 3s.; postage 2d

ACID DROPS

Our very religious B.B.C. have been staging something entitled "Science and Faith" in which a number of scientists indulge in talks which, so far as we have heard them, represent as little science as possible and an infantile Fundamentalism which might have come right out of the heart of a 17-year-old Salvation Army lassie. Dr. Mackay, who is Lecturer in Physics at King's College, almost dissolved into tears as he told us how he found Christ Jesus as a living person in whom he surrendered everything. Dr. Spanner followed suit in almost the same way and in similar terms when he was dealing with "Miracles." Miracles—and, of course, all Christ's miracles—occurred exactly as reported. He couldn't prove any scientifically, naturally, but God, who came down as a Human Being from Heaven, was surely able to perform Miracles.

In addition to his wonderful Miracles, Christ Jesus was to Dr. Spanner, a living person in whom he put all his love and faith. And if such great scientists as Messrs. Mackay and Spanner could believe in the Word of God surely, surely, their listeners should have equal faith and belief. Evidence? What earthly use is evidence? Christ Jesus despised evidence. All he wanted was perfect trust and faith.—In fact, the two gentlemen almost broke into that unhappy, maudlin clerical voice which the B.B.C. comedians know how to parody so well. We wonder what Dr. Barnes and Dr. Inge think of these naïve Fundamentalists?

Just as we expected, the *Daily Mail* received hundreds of letters in congratulation on its stout championship of Jesus and the sparrows as opposed to the dismal Malthusianism of Prof. Hill, the President of the British Association. The impudence of any professor disputing the claim of "our Lord" when he said that God looks after every dear little sparrow—and were not human beings of immensely greater importance than sparrows in the eyes of God?—disgusted the *Daily Mail's* pious readers.

We do not think that Prof. Hill will be unduly disturbed—any more than Malthus was. But we were not altogether surprised to find the Editor of the *New Statesman* siding with the *Daily Mail*—though it is only fair to say that we do not believe that Mr. Kingsley Martin thinks very much of the sparrows argument. He thinks that the "scientists" will, if they follow his suggestions (of course), soon give the world far more food than necessary for an increasing world population. They must cultivate the land, or show others how to do it, which is not yet under cultivation. Thus, the pie in the sky will be available tomorrow—and what matters it if in the meantime millions die of starvation?

As an example, he says that in India only 43 per cent. of the land is under cultivation and "the test of ingenuity is to show how much of the remaining 57 per cent. can be made productive?" That is all; and we are sure that Mr. Martin will always be ready to write "inspirational" leaders in his journal while the scientists "test their ingenuity." Once the 57 per cent. of the land is made "productive," the scientists can go into Central Africa or Central South America with the good wishes of Mr. Martin and his marvellous suggestions. Thus, Prof. Hill is annihilated, and Christ and his sparrows or Mr. Martin and his "test of ingenuity" are triumphant. Well, well.

The Archbishop of Canterbury agreed the other day that there will be "no reunion" of the Churches as yet. Why should there be? After all, the Roman Church is in a

much stronger position than the English Church—or for that matter, any Church. All it has to do is to wait while the "heretics," utterly unable to agree among themselves as to "true" Christianity, will eventually either disappear or, in the name of unity for Christ's sake, go bodily over to Rome. In the meantime, the Archbishop wants "inter-communion," while Rome wants *complete* subjection. We are not going to prophesy which will win but the odds are on Rome.

CHRISTIAN CIVILISATION

Under the caption: "A Spanish prince is 'blooded'" *The Evening Standard* (August 29, 1952) records that "Prince Juan Carlos, 15-year-old heir to Don Juan, Pretender to the Spanish throne, was 'blooded' according to Spanish custom when he shot his first grouse at Dunkeld, Perthshire, yesterday.

"Don Juan and his wife, the Countess of Barcelona, held the Prince down on the heather while his forehead, cheeks, and nose were daubed."

WHEN NIGHT COMES

Sheep-bells tinkle,
Dews besprinkle,
Grass where slowly glooms the green.
Stars now twinkle,
Fades each wrinkle,
Of the paths the day has seen.
Nights veiling,
Ship's a-sailing,
Darkness spreads o'er sea her pall.
Sunlight failing,
Moon's prevailing,
With his beams of peace to all.
Now betiding,
Sleep is guiding,
Through the shapeless land of dreams.
Here abiding,
Love is hiding,
'Neath his wings time's troubled streams.

A. D. HOWELL SMITH.

THE WORLD'S POPULATION

From the United Nations comes a report that the population of the world was approximately two billion [that is, 2,000,000,000—Editor] and four hundred million in mid-1950, according to information released by the Statistical Office of the United Nations. Population by Continents were: Africa, 198,000,000; North America, 216,300,000; South America, 111,400,000; Asia (excluding the Soviet Union), 1,272,000,000; Europe (excluding the Soviet Union), 396,000,000; Oceania, 12,900,000; Soviet Union, 193,000,000 (1946 total).

World numbers are increasing by at least 25 million yearly, net increase of births over deaths is approximately 60,000 each day, 2,500 each hour, 41 each minute. The real cause in the rate of growth is the steadily declining death rate. The only alternative to balancing numbers by more deaths is to achieve a balance through fewer births. Expedients to this end have been most varied. Ireland for over a century has achieved it by delayed marriages and a high rate of celibacy; in Japan, abortion is practised on a vast scale. In Puerto Rico, birth control through sterilization is gaining wide approval. Though acceptable as emergency measures, none of these offers a safe, workable and universally applicable solution of the problem. Nature's methods of famine and flood still operate in India. Unless India brings births into balance with deaths, the death rate will rise eventually to balance births. This could happen even though the entire world was rationed to feed India. William Vogt, ecologist, states: "World over-population represents more of a threat to peace than the atom-bomb." —*The Radical Humanist*, Calcutta—issue of July 6.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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

TO CORRESPONDENTS

- J. HAYES.—As far as we know, chapels and churches do not pay rates and only pay ground rent if the property is not freehold. For confirmation, why not ask one of the Scottish Church journals.
- S. GRAY.—We are not, unfortunately, acquainted with the author whom you mention. Our time, like our space, is limited.
- ALFRED CORRICK.—We think your suggestion an excellent one. We will forward it to the International Secretariat of The World Union in whose jurisdiction it would seem to lie.
- MICHAEL J. BARNES.—Thanks for articles. Your ecclesiastical genealogy affords yet another proof of evolution!
- 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 Secretary of the N.S.S. at this Office by Friday morning.
- When the services of the National Secular Society in connection With Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, giving as long notice as possible.
- Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1, and not to the Editor.

SUGAR PLUM

We have now received from the International Secretariat of the *World Union of Freethinkers* abridged summaries of some of the speeches delivered at the recent Brussels Congress. We shall commence the publication of these in our next week's issue. In place of his usual editorial, the Editor will publish his report on the position and prospects of British Freethought which he made to, the Brussels Congress. We understand that arrangements for the 1954 Congress, to be held in Luxemburg, are already in hand.

"JESUS THE UNKNOWN"

III.

IT must not be thought for a moment that because I consider Merezhkovsky's *Jesus the Unknown*, a book packed with infantile and almost always ignorant criticism, that I never agree with some of the points he makes. On the contrary, I fully agree with him on quite a number of things.

Take, for example, what he has to say about the relations Jesus had with the Devil. Your modern, university-instructed parson is apt to demur strongly if educated people take the Devil exactly as he is painted in the New Testament and in early Christian literature. Our Russian author points out that Dante and Aquinas and even Newton and Pascal believed in Him as a real Person, to say nothing of Goethe whose Mephistopheles is, perhaps, the most popular of all Devils.

But the real question is—did Jesus, known or unknown, believe in the Devil? Merezhkovsky has no hesitation in answering. In Luke (10, 17-19) Jesus clearly asserts that he "beheld" Satan, "as lightning fall from Heaven." If

"THE FREETHINKER" AND YOU

Readers will have noted the improvement to our paper by having the pages cut and stapled. We hope you like it as many requests have continually been made for this to be done.

Other improvements in the format, appearance, and contents are being planned and will take place from time to time. Unfortunately, these and other features we would like to introduce, cost money (no, this is not another financial appeal), but the steadily growing influence of *The Freethinker* can only be maintained by an increased circulation.

To this end, we are shortly inaugurating an intensive campaign to win *one thousand new readers*. This will help reduce costs and the loss sustained in producing our weekly in these difficult days of ever-rising overheads. Every reader and sympathiser will be asked to participate, and suggestions for increasing sales will be welcomed from you!

Full particulars will appear in this column shortly, and it is hoped every N.S.S. member and Freethinker will join with us in the active militant spirit so famous in the past. Watch for details week by week.

Here is one practical idea already being carried out. Mr. Cleaver, the ever-active Secretary of West London Branch, spends his Friday evenings in street sales in Piccadilly Circus, and has built up a regular connection. This is grand work. Who follows in his train?

J. M. ALEXANDER,
Circulation Dept.

Jesus saw Him, then he must have had a corporeal existence. Our author puts it perfectly clearly:—

"If there is no Satan, then the Lord saw nothing fall from Heaven and gave nothing to man on earth; His whole life was a struggle against nothing, for nothing. We must be consistent: either we must deny Christ, or we must accept Him as He is. Jesus without the Devil is as a man without a shadow, is in fact nothing more than a shadow Himself, and His whole life is a 'fatal mistake' as Renan put it. . . All the secret life of Jesus, as well as His revealed life, is a struggle with the Devil."

Merezhkovsky is, of course, quite right. True Christianity, as distinct from Church Christianity, must have its Hell as well as its Heaven, its Devils as well as its Angels. It is almost in vain that the Church, in trying desperately hard to civilise the teaching of Jesus, insists that the Devil and the Temptation are merely allegories. Every Christian who follows Jesus rather than the Church must spurn this civilising process with disgust. Just as there was and is an historical Jesus, so there must be still a real Devil, in all probability with horns and a tail. Jesus saw him and that should settle the matter.

Was Jesus carried about in an aerial flight by the Devil? Of course he was, says Merezhkovsky. Actually, he deals with the Devil and the Temptation in two special chapters, and there is nothing in the Gospels which he doesn't accept exactly as told. In fact, to supplement his case he constantly drags in bits from Clement, or any of the Apocryphal Gospels, everything being grist to the mill and "Gospel" truth as well.

As Merezhkovsky points out—how could these stories be "inventions"? How could they "emanate from the earliest disciples who were the simplest folks imaginable, just Galilean fishermen?" These stories must be true, every one of them, for if they were not "invented" they "actually occurred" as our Russian author insists. I fully agree—either they occurred or they didn't, and it is obvious that the true religion of Jesus (as distinct from "Churchianity") insists on the Devil and the Temptation. And Merezhkovsky admits that, when trying to tempt Jesus, the Devil knew that Jesus was the Son of God, and that Jesus knew that the Devil knew. But he does not tell us why, if the Devil knew that Jesus was the Son of God, he proceeded with His Temptation. It is all very solemn and tragic, and the pity is that our modern Churches,

unlike Merezhkovsky, fight shy of Devils. They much prefer to concentrate on the happy Sunday school morality they claim for Jesus.

In his notes, Merezhkovsky tries hard to show his wide reading and scholarship. The real truth is that, outside some Christian apologetic literature, he has read very little of the vast criticism to which the Gospels have been submitted. I have my greatest doubts whether he has read the authorities he quotes. I suspect all he has done is to search an index and followed a few clues that way. As an example, when referring to Justin he admits that "the Holy Justin Martyr" does not mention the Gospels by name but he "cites a hundred excerpts from the Synoptics and only three from John," which even then are not correctly quoted. The "hundred excerpts" come entirely from Merezhkovsky's imagination, for if there is one thing quite certain it is that the so-called Gospel quotations in Justin are either from other than our Gospels, or he has not correctly quoted them. The truth really is that, if we go by Church history at all, the four Canonical Gospels were, in the form we have them now, unknown before A.D. 150, unknown to Justin as well, and they were part of a large number of other Gospels which are just as authentic. This is recognised, anyway, by Merezhkovsky, for he quotes any of them quite indiscriminately just as it suits his purpose.

He gives quite a number of instances of similar lack of scholarship—the worst being his quoting or pretending to quote authors he has obviously not read. I would be prepared to bet almost anything that he has never read John M. Robertson or Albert Schweitzer or W. B. Smith or Arthur Drews. He knows them by name merely because they are the objects of attack by a number of very angry German theologians who violently oppose any suggestion that Jesus is a myth. And this is all the more surprising because some of these theologians certainly do not believe in Christianity. They look upon Jesus much like our own reverent Rationalists and most Jews do—as a super-Sunday school teacher.

Just one other instance of the author's lack of reading. He is very angry with W. B. Smith (the author of *Ecce Deus*) because Smith does not believe that such a town as Nazareth existed in the time of Jesus; but if he had read the very learned article by Canon Cheyne in the *Encyclopedia Biblica* he would have found that there are very weighty reasons for Smith's disbelief. There is no reference whatever to a town named Nazareth in any of the early writings, Christian and Jewish, where we would expect to see it. There are, of course, a number of explanations of the word, but naturally at this time of the day, it is not easy to be certain of any of them. We simply do not know how, when, or where, the Gospels were compiled. If the mythical theory is accepted, then many of the names of people and places in the Bible were deliberately designed. The reader should study the article "Names" in the *Encyclopedia Biblica* which no one will suspect of unduly stressing any myth theory.

But books on Jesus will continue to multiply. A new "life" will appear every year for perhaps centuries—and Jesus will have his defenders in every country where religion has or had full sway. He may one day be supplanted by Buddha, but not yet in the Western world. The Churches still have powerful influence here, and as long as that continues a new "life" of Jesus will have their heavenly blessing—if its heresy is not too apparent. Anything, anything better than saying that Jesus never existed.

H. CUTNER.

BEYOND ALL REASON!

I AM an Agnostic. I believe that "there are more things in Heaven and Earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy, Horatio." If I did not believe so, I should be religious—or an Atheist.

I believe that many problems that vex us, Infinity, Spacial Curvature, Quanta and the Expanding Universe, do so, not because our minds are too small to hold them, but because they are not the right instruments for so doing. Because, in other words, they are "not built that way."

Every living organism that comes into this world is provided (or has provided itself) with weapons to aid its survival, and that of its species in the struggle for existence. This weapon varies. In some cases it is speed, in others strength. In others endurance, and in yet others adaptation to unpopular conditions, as with Arctic life. In Man (despite a good deal of nonsense spoken about opposable thumbs) the weapon is adaptability.

Adaptability is different, very different from adaptation. Most animals adapt themselves to a particular set of circumstances, as with the polar bear, giraffe and bed-bug. And if those circumstances change radically they perish, having sacrificed adaptability to adaptation.

Man on the other hand adapts himself as little as possible to ruling circumstances; thus making it possible to change with them when they change. In this way, life is possible to mankind under wider conditions than with any other animal. He can live at the Poles or Equator, indoors or outside, in swamp, jungle, river, sea or air. And he can subsist on a diet of meat, flour, rice or potato; or even of quack medicines if so be he's a mind.

Now an animal whose environment changes little finds instinct sufficient to its need. Animals whose environment changes rapidly, however, need something more.

They need something to condition their instinctive reactions. Something to say "Go Ahead!" when conditions are favourable. Something to cry "Hold!" when they are not.

This "something" they have developed, and we, as the most adaptable animal, have developed more than any other creature. This "something" in a word is intelligence.

It has other uses. It is an actual weapon in the struggle and has enabled us to defeat creatures stronger, fleetier and more fecund than ourselves. Also allied to self-consciousness it is a great morale booster, making us think that we are valuable and important and Lords of Creation and God's Chosen People, and as such, worth fighting for, and likely to triumph.

As with most of the skills animals develop, there is a surplus. And this, man is wont to use by thinking about his surroundings and his destiny. This spare-time thinking of abstract matters man values highly. With his natural egotism he feels that life holds a secret; and that one day he will penetrate it. The fact that thinking is a purely utilitarian device seems to have escaped notice.

Thus I think less highly of reason than do some rationalists. But I would not have it thought that I would prefer anything else—Faith, for example, or Authority.

For Reason, pale, sub-standard, utility device that it is, is all we have. It was given to us to fend off the attack of unkind circumstance. To defend our kind against the animal kingdom, and to defend ourselves against our kind. And our kind has never been more dangerous than when it says: "In this sphere Reason is not operative. Harken unto me and all doors shall be open to you." For it is Reason that tells us that behind each door is a cell.

BISSETT LOVELOCK.

A MORMON MIRACLE

One day, Joseph Smith was explaining his creed to a Campbellite preacher, who exclaimed: "The evidence I wish to have is a notable miracle. Then I could believe."

"Well," said Joseph, "What will you have? Will you be struck blind or dumb? Will you be paralysed, or will you have one hand withered? Take your choice. Choose what you please, and in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ it shall be done."

"That is not the kind of miracle I want," protested the preacher.

"Then, Sir," said Joseph, "I can perform none: I am not going to bring trouble upon anyone else to convince you."

DERELICT RELIGION

It used to be the mid-day sun, whose zone and zenith meet,
It blazed to serve the steersman at the prow;
It's dwindled to a broken lamp along a shady street,
And no one goes home that way now.

A. E. C.

CORRESPONDENCE**RUSSIAN INVENTIONS**

SIR,—Surely Mr. Pat Sloan is far too modest when he says that the Russians have not invented everything. The question should be: "What is it that they have not invented?" For example, it is ignorantly thought that W. Friese Greene invented the cinema camera. But any Russian and English Communist knows that he got the idea from S. S. Rottenovsky when this great Russian was chatting with him at the time the portrait given in the Russian Encyclopædia was taken. Rottenovsky already had a full working model at the time but was prevented from exploiting his invention by the corrupt Tsarist Government. Atom bombs by the score had been made in Russian laboratories long before Rutherford even thought of splitting the atom—for, of course, it is universally acknowledged that Russian physicists are centuries ahead of all other physicists. Edison got his idea of the phonograph from I. I. Lunatov when he was travelling in Russia in 1876. Lunatov had already made dozens of perfect records. These can be heard in Stalin's private museum. Fox Talbot, who is stupidly thought to be the inventor of modern photography, was a great traveller in his youth and got his idea of making paper negatives entirely from L. L. Expositov—hence the word "exposure"—whose "sun pictures" as he called them in Russian can still be seen as perfect as when he made them 130 years ago. Even the word "photograph" was invented by K. K. Tripeski—in 1832. F. F. Tumblivollskov not only was making "safety" bicycles decades before Starkey (or whoever is supposed to be the inventor) but his son Ivonovitch is now recognised by the whole world as being the first man to put a modern motor car on the road with all the improvements. He and his brother Serge gave the world the first motor car engine—and in addition showed how to extract petrol from crude oil. This is even acknowledged now, after a lengthy correspondence, by the Automobile Association. If there were space I could fill it with particulars of a thousand other inventions which were pinched by the Western World from Russian inventors—without any protest from a corrupt Tsardom. Thank God, that is no longer the case.—Yours, etc.,
M. M. LYINGTOFF.

THE BALTIC NAVAL OPERATIONS

SIR,—It is curious how the critics of Russia and Russian methods are remaining very quiet concerning the remarkable naval demonstrations by the United States, Britain and their satellites which will shortly take place in the Baltic. I have no recollection of the British Fleet undertaking similar manœuvres in these waters. Russia and Sweden must regard this operation in a very serious light. It is stamped with aggressive designs. What would be said if the Russian and Swedish fleets announced manœuvres in the Channel or in the Mediterranean? Considering what an outcry occurred in the Press when some Russian fishing vessels appeared in Falmouth and on the North Coast of Scotland, the hysteria would be tenfold. Those who criticise the Russians should remember that the opponents of Russia are much more to be criticised for their acts of aggression, as was seen particularly between the years 1918 and 1923. In 1919-20, there was a Czechoslovakian Army operating in Siberia against the Soviet Republic, which went to the length of issuing its own postage stamps for its army, which in the end was soundly defeated by an irregular force under a Chinese general. The stamps are recorded in Stanley Gibbons's catalogue under Czechoslovakia.—Yours, etc.,
C. H. NORMAN.

WHY NOT ESPERANTO?

SIR,—It seems so unfortunate that an event such as the recent Conference of the World Union of Freethinkers should be handicapped by the language difficulty when a practical solution is so readily available. I refer to the use of a neutral idiom—Esperanto.

This year's Universala Kongreso de Esperanto, which was held in Oslo, affords an interesting contrast.

1,300 delegates from 31 countries were together assembled: using, for all purposes, solely one common tongue—Esperanto.

Your readers may be surprised to know that such is the ease with which this constructed language can be acquired that if an international body at its annual general meeting were to pass a resolution to the effect that Esperanto only would be spoken at the following yearly gathering, this would give sufficient time for each representative to possess a working knowledge of the language by the time that meeting took place.

Surely, British Freethought can be in the vanguard in encouraging the adoption of this essentially commonsense medium?—Yours, etc.,
BASIL J. EDGEcombe.

THE STRAFFEN CASE

SIR,—Mr. C. H. Norman's analysis of this case is very interesting, but he is silent in regard to the more important question at the present time as to whether the murderer should be put to death or returned to the Broadmoor asylum. If the latter, there is a danger that the murderer may escape again, and that would be a poor outlook for any children coming across his path. This is a case where capital punishment would be just and in the interests of possible future victims. I would add that hanging is a barbarous method of despatch, and should be replaced by the electric chair, a firing squad, or an offer of poison.

One of the "immediate practical objects" of the National Secular Society is the abolition of capital punishment, but I believe the Society is prepared to revise its immediate programme from time to time in accordance with circumstances. There are fewer murders nowadays in this country comparative with our large population, and it is a fair assumption that this is due to the fear of capital punishment. Even after conviction a murderer may be reprieved upon the recommendation of the Home Secretary, who has to personally consider such cases. Just recently a man who killed his wife with an axe was reprieved! This was surprising, but probably there were extenuating circumstances. Reprieves have been granted in cases where parents in agony of mind have killed their children who were suffering from an incurable disease or terrible infirmity. The actual number of hangings is extremely limited, and Secularists should consider whether capital punishment is a powerful deterrent of murder. If such punishment is retained there are other methods of humane despatch than hanging. It will be remembered that Socrates when sentenced to death was offered a drink of poison to produce painless death, and the offer was accepted.—Yours, etc.,
ALFRED D. CORRICK.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.**OUTDOOR**

MR. J. CLAYTON'S Engagements.—Friday, September 26, 7-30 p.m., Oswaldtwistle (near Library). Sunday, September 28, 3 p.m., Padiham. 7 p.m., Burnley Market.

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Every Sunday evening, 7-30 p.m.: H. DAY.

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

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Plattfields).—Every Sunday, 3 p.m.: (St. Mary's Gate, Blitzed Site), every Sunday, 8 p.m.; (Alexandra Park Gate), every Wednesday, 8 p.m.; (Deansgate Bomb Site), every weekday, 1 p.m.: MESSRS. WOODCOCK and BARNES.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, 12 noon: L. EBURY; (Highbury Corner), Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: L. EBURY.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Sunday, September 28, 7 pm.: T. M. MOSLEY and A. ELSMERE.

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'NEIL.

INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Satis Cafe, off New St.).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: VICTOR MORRIS (General Secretary, N.S.S.), "Youth's Need of Freethought."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: S. K. RATCLIFFE, "Conscience and the State."

FLOOD—FACT OR FICTION?

"IN the six-hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened and the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights." (Gen. 7: II. 12.)

The Genesis story has three modern explanations:—

1. That it is simply a nature myth, symbolising the return of Spring.
2. That it is a variation of the creation story, representing not the destruction, but the first emergence of the world out of the waters. ("And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land earth." (Gen. I: 9. 10.)
3. That it is based on some local disaster.

In my opinion, the latter explanation is the most feasible of the three, especially when certain evidences support this theory.

The Genesis story is not the only record of the flood, for similar stories occur in the legends of the red Indians of North America, and the Aztecs and Mayans of South America, but, for the present, let us examine Genesis.

That it has been compiled from two previous records has already been established, this accounting for the conflicting statements in its context. The Yahwistic document (900-750 B.C.) records that the great flood was caused by the rain; that the animals entered the Ark by sevens; that they took seven days to enter the Ark; that the flood culminated in forty days; and that birds were sent out to seek dry land.

The Priestly document (5th century B.C.) records that the flood was caused by rain plus an uprush of subterranean waters; that God warned Noah of the coming flood and gave him instruction on how to make the Ark; that the animals entered by twos and took only one day to enter the Ark; that the flood culminated after 150 days and that the Ark came to rest on Arrarat.

Anyone reading Genesis to-day can see how these two documents have become intermingled.

Evidences of a great flood were found by two archaeological expeditions in the winter of 1929-30. The expeditions, working at the ancient cities of Kish, near Babylon, and Ur, near the Chaldees, came upon deposits of mud over eight feet thick, beneath which were found evidences of a previous civilisation.

There are various explanations for the actual cause of the flood. One is that an ocean once existed, stretching from the Caucasus to Mongolia, and that by some natural phenomena the contents of this ocean poured down upon Mesopotamia and Palestine. A second theory is that an ice-cap stretched far down over Russia and caused many minor floods in the Mesopotamian area, and, in particular, one huge flood which has been remembered in legend.

A third theory, which seems to be the most reasonable explanation of the flood stories on both sides of the Atlantic, is that the cause was the submersion of the continent of Atlantis.

Although samples taken from the ocean bed have, so far, failed to establish, geologically, that there was such a continent; it is an established fact that the flora and fauna of the Canary Islands have a connection with the Atlas Mountains on the mainland of South Africa. The Islands of the Canary and Azores groups are believed to be the mountain peaks of the lost continent. At one

time, as Winwood Reade has pointed out, the Mediterranean was a fertile valley until the "Pillars of Hercules" (Gibraltar) were breached and the Atlantic poured in.

It is my contention that the cause of this breach was the volcanic eruption which caused the submersion of Atlantis, which, in turn, caused the tidal waves which swept the coasts of North and South America, and resulted in the flood legends in that part of the world.

During the eruption of Krakatoa (August 26-28, 1883), tidal waves caused the loss of 36,000 lives in Java and Sumatra. In Sumatra, lighthouses were carried away, and a Dutch man-of-war was carried nearly two miles inland and left nearly thirty feet above sea-level. Imagine just such a happening in ancient times when communications were by word of mouth, and you'll see how the thirty feet would ascend to mountainous heights, and how any people alive in the boat would be considered those "chosen of God."

I don't think that there can be any doubt that there was a Great Flood, which was used to good effect by the priests in their efforts to cow the peoples. Although the peoples of long ago can be excused their belief in such a "Divine Occurrence," how can so-called "educated" people of to-day be excused their acceptance of it?

WILLIAM SPENCER.

THE EXTENDED TONGUE by Oliver Brown (Scottish Secretariat, 1s.)

THIS is a pamphlet worth every farthing of its modest price. It is crammed with most excellent epigrams, maxims and anecdotes. Unlike most Nationalists, Mr. Oliver Brown reveals himself as a witty, wise and fully breathing human being. He has not only a mind, but also the power to put his mind engagingly into words—English words. Every intelligent Englishman should buy *The Extended Tongue*; the Scots no doubt will borrow a copy. Mr. Brown's distinction is made more obvious by *Scottish Journal* (published in Glasgow at 1s.), No. 1 of which has just appeared, and which looks, at first sight, like an advertisement for shortbread. In it, Sir Compton Mackenzie confesses to feeling his years, "Hugh MacDiarmid" poetises, and Jean Mann, M.P., and Lord Boyd Orr write articles. This journal would be much the better for the inclusion of Oliver Brown, as soda-water is the better for the addition of Scotch. It has one pretty touch of geographical learning. Under the heading "Caledonia" is the date-line "London (Middlx.), Tuesday." London (Surrey) will no doubt have its turn, but Paris (France) will possibly be blue-pencilled. *The Vision of Cathkin Braes* by Edwin Morgan (William Maclellan, Glasgow) is a small collection of poems worth reading. "A Courtly Overture" is a poem of great charm. It will not easily be forgotten.

J. O'H.

GOD A GENTLEMAN

In the reign of Charles II, when Captain Vraut and two companions were executed for the murder of Mr. Tynn, at the instigation of their master, Count Konigsmark, who being an important gentleman was carefully kept out of the trial, instead of repenting on the scaffold as was customary, the Captain announced: "Among little people the killing of a man is regarded of some consequence, but among gentlemen but a small matter. I have no doubt God is sufficient of a gentleman to recognise another gentleman."