

The Freethinker

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FROM a Welsh reader who permits his name to be quoted, Mr. Douglas V. Morgan, comes the following:—

"I have read *The Freethinker* for some months and also a selection of the literature of freethought. I hope that I have read with intelligence and, more important, freedom from bias, although, as you know, I am an incurable idealist. However, I wonder if *The Freethinker* would give me 'light' on this question:

"We are all agreed that there are thousands of people who lead good lives. That is to say, they keep the laws of the State. They try to earn their bread in an honest fashion. They do a kindness when and where they can. Yet they do get a raw deal in life. They always seem to be at the wrong end of the table when rewards are given. Secondly, we all know of people who lead evil lives, do no good to anyone and spend all their days in self-seeking. Yet all goes well. They get all they want and are quite satisfied with life. Now comes the point. If this life is all and if death is the end, then do not the good get a reward and likewise the evil? Is it a case of pure chance or luck? Is it the case that the 'sharps live on the flats'?"

"The presence and success of Evil makes one think. What do YOU think?"

What is "Evil"?

In the first place the terms "evil" and "success" cannot be defined with finality. What is ticketed as "evil" depends on who does the ticketing. As a freethinker I would say that cruelty is the only sin. But a religious person like Mr. Morgan would draw up quite a catalogue of sins. And as for success, we might agree that it means the consummation of a desired goal or plan, but whether it was worth achieving depends on what we rate as worthy. For instance, Mr. Morgan says good people are those who keep the laws of the State. How very neat! How very simple and convenient! If the laws of the State are the correct recipe for leading a good life, why alter them? Why bring in Bills to change or revoke existing laws? Why not bring back all the legislation of the Middle Ages, on the ground that obedience to it meant good lives, and it was therefore wrong to abandon it. Or, if Mr. Morgan allows that it is advisable to change laws, then he admits that the laws of the State are not the perfect recipe for a good life.

Mr. Morgan complains that worthless people (we should probably not agree as to who these are) frequently get what they want. And I expect it often "serves them right." As they can only want worthless things they get what they deserve. With money a man can buy his dreams. If his dreams are of so much dross, then that is what he gets. We can only get with money what we can already think of as possessing. He who is dead by nature to the riches of music, philosophy, poetry, art and learning, cannot get them with money. He can only fill his library with a dead

weight of paper. No one can buy what he is incapable of receiving. He can only buy the shell in which it is cased.

I doubt whether worthless people are made less so by getting their wants satisfied. As Chapman Cohen said, little men are made smaller by promotion.

Where Mr. Morgan makes, I think, a strong point is in his complaint that kind and honest people often get a raw deal in life. Granted. Our agreement here is complete. And Mr. Morgan sends this complaint to *The Freethinker*. We might reply as follows:—

"Sir,

We are in receipt of your complaint about the prevalence of injustice in this life. As you are a holder of re-

ligious beliefs we ask you to re-direct your displeasure to the proper department, God Almighty, whose address we are not able to supply."

When the Christian hankers after rewards and punishments in another life beyond the grave, in order to remedy the injustices of this one, he is really passing a criticism on his God. His faith is strained when he looks round and sees many wrongs in this life. His reaction is to hope that God will straighten it all out in the next.

But if the Almighty made this world would it not have been just as easy to get His sums right first time? Apparently God is to be let off as a first offender and given another chance to redeem himself. He has admittedly forfeited His character in this world and is expected to vindicate it in the next. This is Christian forgiveness. He forgives God's blunders and palliates his sins. He then posits another life and hopes to God that God will do better next time. This is the theory of rogues for the subjection of fools.

The Secularist Answer

Compare the secularist answer. We, too, see what Mr. Morgan sees—injustice monstrous and wasteful. But we accept it as a challenge to man to change the order of things here and now, and not wait for God to rectify matters by postponing them for a hypothetical time and place.

The Christian kneels in petitionary prayer, hands together and eyes closed. The secularist stands, eyes open, hands active.

The Christian prays for "good" to prevail in the next life. The secularist works for right to prevail in this one.

To assume that the world *must* conform eventually to our standards of fair play is simply to eject into the "heavens" our own desires. It is wishful thinking on a universal scale. It is to suppose that man is the darling of an ethical order of things, specially designed not to offend good taste. And so long as that view holds, so much less is the incentive to man to fashion his own laws of justice, frame his own ideals and put his own house in order.

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

What Do YOU Think?

By G. H. TAYLOR

Acts of God?

By COLIN McCALL

IN one of his poems Burns expressed the view that it was a law of nature that "man was made to mourn." Certainly suffering is part of the human lot, and not all of it is attributable to "man's inhumanity to man." Irrespective of whether or not men fight each other, there are always the ravages of nature to fight. The time may come when these are our only battles but it seems rather a long way off. At present we must take heart from the fact that people of all nations sympathise with, and help, those who are the victims of natural catastrophe.

Two disasters have recently been in the news: the widespread floods in Asia and the earthquake in Algeria. In both cases, aid has been sent by our own and other governments; but the suffering will be terrible. India, Pakistan, China and Tibet have been affected by the floods and at the end of August 25,000 square miles were submerged in India alone. Cholera has also broken out in the stricken area and has added to the death roll.

Reading of such disasters, I cannot help wondering how the religious believer feels about them. Fundamentally, of course, he reacts in the same way as the atheist: he is horrified and helps in any way he can. But what does he *think*? It seems impossible for him to avoid asking "Why?" and that means he has some awkward reconciling to do. For the problem of evil is the great insoluble problem for theists. There is no way of getting round it; once a theist thinks about it, and thinks about it honestly, his faith is likely to be shaken. The trouble is that few of them do: they are content to dismiss it as part of some great divine plan that cannot be understood until after death. Our minds, they say, are too small, too finite, to comprehend God's infinite ways. They fail to tell us how their own, equally limited, minds are able to discern any plan at all. A clock, it is true, has a maker, but clocks are not usually made faultily as the earth must have been if it is the work of God.

Deaths from the earthquake in Algeria already number about fifteen hundred and some five thousand more people have been injured. Both the ancient and the new cathedrals are in ruins. Yet hundreds of communicants are reported to have attended Mass in the open air. This would seem hardly conceivable were it not an all too common feature of religious behaviour. Christians are gluttons for punishment. They suffer and then thank God that their suffering was not worse; or they cry out miserably that they deserved it—and more. But perhaps these attitudes represent a little progress in the last two hundred years. When Lisbon was devastated by the earthquake of 1755 it was still believed that the presence of heretics in the town could have incurred divine wrath, so the Inquisition promptly held an *auto-da-fé* and burnt a few people alive. God, presumably, was propitiated. But what of the injured and the homeless? It was the Church's arch-enemy, Voltaire, who cried:—

"Unhappy mortals! Dark and mourning earth!
Alfrighted gathering of human kind!
Eternal lingering of useless pain!
Come, ye philosophers, who cry, 'All's well,'
And contemplate this ruin of a world . . ."

at the start of his famous *Poem on the Lisbon Disaster* (as translated by Mr. Joseph McCabe).

This poem always comes to my mind when I read about earthquakes, and Lord Morley was surely right in describing it as "one of the most sincere, energetic and passionate pieces to be found in the whole literature of the eighteenth century." I am fully aware that Condorcet regarded it as "the most sublime homage ever offered to the Supreme

Being" and that Mr. Alfred Noyes concurred with this opinion in his controversial biography (*Voltaire*: 1936), but Lord Morley thought otherwise. To the latter, it seemed that Voltaire was unable to solve the enigma presented in the poem: "He can find no answer, and confesses that no answer is to be found by human effort. Whatever side we take, we can only shudder: there is nothing that we know, nothing that we have not to fear." Mr. Noyes—whilst agreeing that it is "one of the sincerest pieces of work that Voltaire ever wrote"—accused Lord Morley of not reading the poem to its conclusion. It was there, he said, in the "climax and crown of the whole poem" that everything was answered. I cannot accept this. Whilst I have obviously no means of knowing if Lord Morley read the poem through, I think that his judgment is vindicated by a perusal of it.

Clearly there is no "sublime homage" to God in passages like this:—

"Think ye this universe had been the worse
Without this hellish gulf in Portugal?
Are ye so sure the great eternal cause,
That knows all things, and for itself creates,
Could not have placed us in this dreary clime
Without volcanoes seething 'neath our feet?"

or:—

"I am a puny part of the great whole.
Yes; but all animals condemned to live,
All sentient things, born by the same stern law,
Suffer like me, and like me also die."

Nor when he poses the problem of evil, as he does again and again:—

"Confess it freely—evil stalks the land
Its secret principle unknown to us.
Can it be from the author of all good?"

"From that all-perfect Being came not ill:
And came it from no other, for he's lord:
Yet it exists . . ."

Wishing that the earthquake had occurred in desert wastes, the poet asks the all-important question:

"Why suffer we, then, under one so just?"

Can Mr. Noyes answer? Can any theist? Of course not! And neither could Voltaire. What Mr. Noyes considered to be Voltaire's "moving and superbly humble answer to his own questionings" is really no answer at all. Turning from Mr. McCabe's version to Mr. Noyes's own prose translation, we read:—

"Once there was a Caliph who, at the hour of death, said this only as prayer to the God he adored: '*I bring You, oh sole King, sole Being unlimited, all that in Your immensity You lack—defects, regrets, evil, ignorance.*' He might have added '*Hope*.'" It was the final word, in particular, that appealed to Mr. Noyes and he proceeded to emphasise it with a capital that was not there in the original French (he also threw in a few other capitals for good measure!). "Hope, not fear, is here the last word," he wrote: a statement I have no intention of contesting. But it seems to me a resigned, rather than a hopeful ending, and it scarcely alters the melancholy tone of the whole poem. Certainly it cannot be considered a reply to the indignant questioning that has gone before.

Those same, unanswerable questions are as pertinent to-day as they were two centuries ago: as applicable to Orleansville as to Lisbon. The last word of Voltaire's poem is "hope" but the total impression is quite different. It is a cry of anguish for suffering humanity.

On the Blessed Word "Hate"

By H. CUTNER

LOOKING back over many years, I have found that nothing gets a thorough believer in Christianity so angry as when you say that at least half of the teaching of Jesus represents "hate" in its clearest form. And not only Christians. Jews and reverent Rationalists are also in the same boat.

For centuries we have been told and taught that the greatest "teaching" of all time came from Jesus Christ. Nothing in the world before or since can in any way equal his love and mercy. Christ, in fact, is the only "Hope of the World."

But when one reads the Gospels for oneself, really reads them I mean, it is astonishing how much hate and denunciation come from gentle Jesus. Christians are almost beside themselves with rage when the relevant passages are pointed out. Jews hate the idea that the greatest Jew of all time should have angrily denounced everybody who may have disagreed with him; while reverent Rationalists, anxious to salvage as much of the "teaching" of Jesus as they can, blandly tell you that the English language, when used by him, doesn't always mean what it means when used by everybody else.

Oh yes, when Jesus tells you to *love* your enemies—he means just that. *You* must love them though *he* can denounce them to his heart's content. But when he tells you to *hate* your parents that is something quite different. Really, there must be some mistake. "Hate" never, never means "hate" when used by Jesus, though it always means hate when used by a blatant Atheist. Moreover, the times have changed. At the beginning of the century, aggressive attacks on Jesus of this kind may have had some use—though even then the reverent unbeliever did his best to dissociate himself from such assinine infidelity.

Everybody knows how Jesus, in spite of his tremendous love for everybody, attacked the Scribes and the Pharisees:

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites . . . ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

Any well-instructed Christian will tell you that "hell" here is wrongly translated, it should be "Gehenna"; although in another beautiful passage gentle Jesus sweetly tells his hearers how "the children of the Kingdom" shall be "cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth"; and in still another, "all things that offend" shall be cast "into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

The strange thing about all this is that not only the Authorised Version sticks to the "fire" and the "wailing" and "gnashing" of teeth, so do the Revised Version and Moffat and even Robert Young's *Literal Translation of the Bible*. And what does all this lead to? Simply that, whether there is or there is not a Hell or a Gehenna, gentle Jesus certainly believed in one which was "a furnace of fire," and very cheerfully consigned "unbelievers," that is, unbelievers in *him*, to it with the merciful promise of plenty of wailing and gnashing of teeth.

But does this mean that he "hated" unbelievers? Well, if words have any meaning at all I should vigorously reply—"You bet he did." Why, he even said:

He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

That word "damned" must have stuck in the throats of believers. The dear old translators used words which for them had a definite meaning, and they made no bones about "damning" every heretic. Nowadays, when the legend of a gentle Jesus going about "doing good" is

assiduously disseminated, "damned" is a damnable word: so, in modern editions of the Authorised Version it has been unobtrusively "corrected" to "condemned." We heretics are now, alas, only condemned.

But did Jesus insist that you "hate" your parents to be his disciple? Well let us examine the Authorised Version as a start. The passage is:

If any man come to me and hate not his father, and his mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14, 26.)

Considering this comes from the *Authorised Version*, to doubt its authenticity must make you a blatant heretic only fit to be "damned"—beg pardon, "condemned." But what does the Revised Version say? Exactly the same without even a note about it.

What about Moffatt as a fine example of a modern translation? This is how he puts the passage:

If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, aye and his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

Whether "hate" means "hate" or not, Moffatt found the word in the Greek and was obliged to use it.

How does that remarkable Biblical scholar, Dr. Robert Young, in his *Literal Translation of the Bible* render it? Here it is:

If anyone doth come to me, and doth not hate his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers, and sisters, and yet even his own life, he is not able to be my disciple.

Again the word "hate"!

Finally, let us see what the Codex Sinaiticus (for which it may be remembered the British Government gave Russia £100,000) says. This Greek copy of the "Sacred" Word is supposed to be the best in many ways that has come down to us. The word translated "hate" is in Greek "mis" and it *always* means "hate" wherever it is used in the New Testament. One very orthodox and reverent commentator (A. E. Knock, *The Concordant Version*) says about the passage—"This saying has proved a stumbling stone to many, and it is usual to tone down the word 'hating' to some milder term. But it is the same word which undoubtedly means hate in other connections." So "hate" even then used by gentle Jesus, meek and mild, does mean "hate" in spite of Jesus lovers. And after all, did Jesus love his own mother? Is there in the Gospel record one decent word that Jesus addressed to his mother—or father, for that matter? If there is, I should like to see it.

I do not suppose for a moment that the above has made or will make any impression whatever on any Jesus champion. No name in literature has ever had the adulation paid to Jesus Christ and, at the moment, it is being multiplied a thousand times. It is just impossible for Jesus to have asked you to hate your parents—never mind what it says in God's Precious Word.

For nearly 2,000 years we have been told how Jesus, his heart always bleeding for the poor and the suffering, went about "doing good." It will take a long time before such publicity can possibly die. As far as I have met them, some of the strongest supporters of this kind of Jesus—the Man Jesus—have been the people who always insist that they are Agnostics or Rationalists. And the true Christian can sit back and laugh.

This Believing World

The "Sunday Graphic's" tame parson, the Rev. F. Martin, heads a recent article, "Poor Mr. Maugham"—the cause of his pious pity being that Mr. Somerset Maugham has declared that he does not know whether "God exists or not." In addition, he has said, "There is no reason for life and life has no meaning" which, incidentally and philosophically, is quite true. Mr. Martin is naturally very sorry for anyone who speaks as plainly as that, and all the more so because it proves that the eminent novelist is *not* a Christian. This combination—to be one of the world's greatest living novelists, and to be a non-Christian at the same time, is really too much for Mr. Martin. We hope he will grin and bear it, all the same. Does he not know that quite a few of the world's greatest men and women have contemptuously rejected Christianity?

To come to the "Sunday Graphic" again. The other week, some of the members of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Divine Healing watched the greatest modern Divine Healer, Mr. Harry Edwards, at work. The S. G. correspondent, Mr. T. Feely, who was there, appears to have been not at all impressed, not even when Mr. Edwards solemnly assured everybody present that he was carrying on "the work the Master started." No doubt Mr. Edwards really believes this, but we hope it won't break his heart when we say that there is no evidence whatever that any "healing" was ever done by the "Master" or even that the "Master" ever lived.

Unfortunately, this must have been one of Mr. Edwards' off-nights, for after a ten-year-old child with her left leg in irons through polio was absolutely cured, Mr. Feely followed her and her mother who said pathetically, "It seems to be just as it was." An almost blind lady, who had her sight completely restored, was a few minutes later unable to see a pencil held 18 inches away. Mr. Edwards also failed to cure "a deaf woman." And so on with a number of other cases. On this occasion, Mr. Edwards appears to have been a very poor advertisement for the "Master"—but does that matter? Hundreds of millions of people still believe in the nonsense of Christianity—why shouldn't a few thousands believe in the nonsense of Divine Healing?

The Radio Mission is now in full swing. Pious prowlers are going to make personal visits to houses—and some of us, we are sure, are very sorry that these people rarely happen to choose Freethinkers for their "man-to-man" appeal. The Vicar of St. Luke's Church in Walthamstow, however, does not seem too enthusiastic. Reception of the prowlers, he says, is "friendly" and people have shown some interest, "but there is comparative ignorance of the Radio Mission—some people did not even know it was taking place." Too, too bad—so we hope this little publicity will help the Radio Mission to get a move on.

One newspaper says: "The youth of to-day are the churchgoers of to-morrow," one of those happy aphorisms which has exactly the same validity as if one said that the youth of to-day would all be flying to the sun to-morrow. In spite of the Rev. B. Graham and his discovery that there was a "spiritual hunger" in England to-day, his complete failure is shown by the fact that there now has to be a Radio Mission. And afterwards—another? And another? Outwardly, England may be called "Christian." In reality, there has never been so little genuine belief in its history.

Highland soldiers serving abroad seem to be playing ducks and drakes with the "colour bar." They are marrying local girls—coloured, Chinese, Indian, it's all the same to them—but not at all to the regimental chaplains. One of these, the Rev. D. Crombie, appears to be dreadfully upset; he spoke to the men, he hurled sermons at them, and he warned "Guianese girls of the difficulties" they would face in Scotland. In addition, the prospective mothers-in-law are not at all impressed with this practical example of true Christianity—all, all are one in Christ. And what about the white lassies in Scotland—what do they say?

People in the U.S.A. are bewildered. More men and women go to church there than in Europe, and there are more religions to choose from—but, alas, crime is steadily increasing. The increases are particularly high in cases of murder, manslaughter, rape, robbery and violent assault. And it is no use blaming poverty for the standard of living has steadily increased. Nor can illiteracy be blamed. One thing is, however, quite certain: belief in religion and constant church-going have done nothing whatever to stop the rise in crime. Not even belief in Jesus.

Chapman Cohen on the Church

WHAT the lord took he held by right of force; what the Church took it held by force of cunning. And as the cunning of the Church was, in the long run, more powerful than the brute force of the robber lord, the priesthood grew in riches until its wealth became a threat to the whole community. In the 13th century the clergy numbered one in 52 of the population, and the possessions of the Church represented a third of the land of England. Best of all—for the Church—not only were the clergy freed from the performance of numerous duties, and from ordinary processes of law, but they were allowed to tax themselves independently of the rest of the community. Much of the land acquired by the Churches was given to them as endowments for the community, and in the case of tithe part of it was to be set aside for charity. The Church, however, ignored all obligations in these directions.

To talk of the Church as the friend of the poor is idle. The Church naturally protected its slaves or serfs from the assaults of other owners; but that differed in no respect from the way in which one noble resisted the assaults of other nobles. Property may not always be depended upon to safeguard itself. But when one applies such a test as the Statute of Labourers, one finds it receiving the full support of the Church until it was repealed in the time of Elizabeth (I). And of the general attitude of the ruling classes Prof. Thorold Rogers says: "I contend that from 1563 to 1824 a conspiracy concocted by the law and carried out by the parties interested in its success was entered into to cheat the English workman of his wages, to tie him to the soil, deprive him of hope, and to degrade him into irredeemable poverty." That was the net result of the influence of Christianity and of the activity of the Christian Church in spreading abroad a spirit of kindness, humanity and brotherhood.—*Christianity and Slavery.*

It is interesting to observe Christians trying to "purify" their legion by discarding its historic doctrines. It so much resembles a man trying to purify his digestion by throwing away his digestive organs.—C.C.

The only real safeguard against tyranny is the creation of a type of mind to which it is detestable and intolerable, and which can never rest comfortably in its presence.—C.C.

THE FREETHINKER

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

To Correspondents

MRS. G. MATSON writes that she gives general approval to Mr. Craig's article on Obscenity and freedom of thought, but she, as a member of the Communist Party, denies Mr. Craig's statement that the Communist Party enforce their dogmas by the use of fear. We hope she is right, but we cannot argue this here.

HELEN O'REILLY.—We should like to examine any evidence you can show for your theological assertions.

A. WHITTAKER.—Darwin's *Origin of Species* is sometimes called (not in disparagement) the "Origin of Gaps." Mendelism is supplementary, not antagonistic, to Darwinian evolution.

JEAN TOUDIC.—Thanks for cutting about Harvest Festivals. We agree with you as to where our thanks should be directed, especially this unkindly summer for food-producers.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

J. CLAYTON'S LECTURES.—Sunday, October 17, 3-15 p.m., Blackburn Market. 7-30 p.m., Preston (Town Hall Square).

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Every Sunday, 7 p.m.: F. ROTHWELL.

Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle St.).—Sunday at 8 p.m.: J. W. BARKER and E. MILLS.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: G. A. WOODCOCK.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, October 17, noon: L. EBURY and H. ARTHUR.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Every Friday at 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY. Sunday, 6-30 p.m., Old Market Square: T. M. MOSLEY and A. ELSMERE.

INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute, Second Floor).—Sunday, October 17, 6-45 p.m.: J. COLIN SIDDONS, B.A.: "A Visit to Soviet Russia."

Conway Discussion Circle (South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, October 19, 7 p.m., in the Library: A. ROBERTSON, M.A., "The Art of Invective."

Junior Discussion Group (South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall).—Friday, October 15, 7-15 p.m.: Lecture, "The Visit of the Labour Party Delegation to China."

Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, October 17, 6-30 p.m.: Mrs. DIANA PURCELL, "The Early Life of D. H. Lawrence."

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Trades Hall, Thurland Street, Room 7).—Thursday, October 21, 7-30 p.m.: A. ELSMERE, "Palestine."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Large Lecture Theatre, Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, October 17, 2-30 p.m.: Dr. D. N. DOUGLAS, "On T. M. Mosley."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall).—Sunday, October 17, 11 a.m.: Dr. W. E. SWINTON, "A Lecture."

West London Branch N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, Marylebone, W.1, five minutes from Edgware Road Station).—Sunday, October 17, 7-15 p.m.: MONICA WHATELY, "East and South Africa: A Challenge."

Notes and News

The West London Branch N.S.S. programme of lectures gives the title of Monica Whately's talk on Sunday as "Russia 1921 and Russia To-day." It was to be based on observations of a delegate visiting Russia, but as the trip has been postponed Miss Whately has changed her title to "East and South Africa—A Challenge."

The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund

Previously acknowledged: £348 5s. 3d.

J. Gordon, £1; J. P. Tuck (Merseyside Branch), 10s.; G. Dickinson, £1; Wm. MacKee, £2 5s.; Joseph Wilson (Belfast), £2; C. Lambert, 7s. 6d.; T. H. L. (North London Branch), £5; A. Hancock, 1s.; L. Hanger, 1s. 6d.; B. Dupree, £1 1s.; G. H. Taylor, £5; F. S. B. Lawes (Birmingham), £20; H. Beck, 10s.; S. Greenberg, 5s.; H. Pirouet (Guernsey), £1; A. W. Coleman, £2; S. Wilson, £2; A. G. Bedane, £1 1s.; Leicester Secular Society, £5 5s.; H. T. Derrett, £1. Total, £399 12s. 3d.

Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund

By G. H. TAYLOR

IN May, 1981, *The Freethinker* will, we hope, celebrate its Centenary. The story of that hundred years will almost certainly be one of ever-pressing financial hardship in the face of which most journals would have died. It will be the story of how the paper was on more than one occasion saved, not by the efforts of one or two people, but by the devotion of its readers as a whole.

Such a situation exists now. *The Freethinker* will be saved either (a) by its readers, or (b) by a series of Fairy Godmothers. The latter, though we should not spurn their appearance, are regarded as improbable. We therefore turn to the readers.

The yearly income available for running *The Freethinker* is no more than the *monthly* income of the chief Church dignitary in this country. And the total income at the disposal of the Church for propagating Christianity, compared with that available for propagating Freethought, must reach almost astronomical proportions. We have all the arguments on our side, but financially *The Freethinker* still plays David to the Church Goliath.

Men have been to prison for *The Freethinker*. Men have suffered in health and pocket. Vast numbers have suffered professionally.

The main task which faced the early *Freethinker* was to rebut Christian superstition. In its pages Foote, Symes, Wheeler, Heaford, Aveling, Moss and Ball launched an unanswerable indictment of the entire Christian structure, both in doctrine and institution. Later, Chapman Cohen combined this approach with a more comprehensive handling of the whole Freethought position, lifting it to a philosophy in its own right—an outcome certainly envisaged by Foote and others. Cohen was no specialist, or expert in any department of science. *He was an expert in thinking.* Reacting to his inspiration, thousands of men and women began to think independently for the first time. He never hankered after profundity and solemnity. His thoughts were usually crystal-clear and he conveyed them as he would have spoken them. The existence of *The Freethinker* is a guarantee that his work will not sink into oblivion. Let us then see that its future evolution is worthy of its foundations in the past.

Another alteration in the West London Branch programme took place last Sunday, when Mr. Joseph McCabe was unable to give his lecture on "Is there a Religious Revival?", not having sufficiently recovered from his recent indisposition. Mr. F. A. Ridley kindly brought forward his engagement to speak for the Branch in December, and addressed a large audience on "Socialism and Religion." We need hardly add that Mr. McCabe is determined to fulfil his part in the Branch's programme at the earliest possible date.

The Verdict of the Monuments

By E. H. GROUT

YOU'RE a miserable sinner. Don't argue! It says in the Prayer Book that we are all miserable sinners. Well, you're one. You're a descendant from our "first parents," Adam and Eve. They weren't born in the ordinary way: God created them—so they didn't have any navels. Still, "what you never have you never miss," and the naked couple were apparently quite happy in the Garden of Eden, with plenty of fruit and an abundant water supply. God was not too stand-offish: He talked with them from time to time, presumably in Esperanto, and sauntered in the garden in the cool of the day.

Whatever language it was, it was understood and spoken by the serpent, who was a subtle beast. He knew that the two humans had been warned by God not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for in the day that they ate of it they would surely die. The serpent pooh-pooed this threat, when talking to Eve. His arguments as expressed by Milton (safely tucked away in the ninth book of *Paradise Lost*), show that the poet's mind could see the illogicality of the orthodox position.

Queen of this universe! do not believe
Those rigid threats of death: ye shall not die;
How should ye? by the fruit? It gives you life
To knowledge: by the Threatener? look on me,
Me, who have touch'd and tasted; yet both live,
And life more perfect have attain'd than fate
Meant me, by venturing higher than my lot.
Shall that be shut to man, which to the beast
Is open? or will God incense his ire
For such a petty trespass, and not praise
Rather your dauntless virtue, whom the pain
Of death denounced, whatever thing death be,
Deterr'd not from achieving what might lead
To happier life, knowledge of good and evil;
Of good, how just? of evil, if what is evil
Be real, why not known, since easier shunn'd?
God, therefore, cannot hurt ye, and be just;
Not just, not God; not fear'd then, nor obey'd.
And what are gods, that man may not become.
As they, participating godlike food?
The gods are first, and that advantage use
On our belief, that all from them proceeds.
I question it; for this fair earth I see,
Warm'd by the sun, producing every kind;
Then, nothing: if they all things, who enclosed
Knowledge of good and evil in this tree,
That whoso eats thereof, forthwith attained
Wisdom without their leave? and wherein lies
The offence, that man should thus attain to know?
What can your knowledge hurt him, or this tree
Impart against his will, if all be his?
Or is it envy?

Most people will agree that Milton's serpent put up a very strong case. At any rate, Adam and Eve both ate the forbidden fruit; and, according to the story, God exacted a colossal penalty of implacable spitefulness, punishing the whole human race for what Adam and Eve had done. Because of this "petty trespass," sin and death were inflicted upon the world, man must earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, and woman must bring forth children in sorrow; the very ground was cursed so that it should annoy mankind by bringing forth thorns and thistles.

There is not much point in exhibiting the illogicalities, crudities, and savage morality of this account, for the endeavour to make out that it is inspired writing has long been abandoned. We know that the Jews took this account from the Babylonians. This was admitted in 1894 by Professor the Rev. A. H. Sayce in *The Higher Criticism and the Verdict of the Monuments* (published by the

Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge). This is what Sayce says:—

But it is not only in the matter of geography and in the general outlines as well as in the details of the narrative, that the Biblical account of the Fall gives evidence of its derivation from Babylonia. The very words that are used in it betray their Babylonian origin.

This is a plain statement from the Christian side.

Sayce also says: "Babylonian documents underlie alike the Elohist and the Jehovistic narratives" of the Creation and the Flood.

You miserable sinners must not suppose that announcements of this kind can be made without prayer and fasting and painful sittings! In 1922 the Archbishops of Canterbury and York appointed a Commission to inquire into Christian doctrine. It sat for 15 years, and in 1938 published an exquisitely guarded report of 242 pages. It says (p. 45):—

No objection to a theory of evolution can be drawn from the two Creation narratives in Gen. i and ii, since it is generally agreed among educated Christians that these are mythological in origin, and that their value for us is symbolic rather than historical.

And that after declaring for centuries that the stories were true! As recently as the early part of the nineteenth century, church dignitaries asserted that the whole body of the Bible was true, to the last comma.

The assumption still made in the majority of churches, chapels, and meeting-houses is that the Bible is true. People like Bishop Barnes can get up in the pulpit and express some doubts about the Virgin Birth and other myths—the fact that the Church allows this shows how "tolerant" the ecclesiastics are!

It is a mode of placating those in the churches who have done a little thinking for themselves. For them—Barnes, Inge, R. J. Campbell, and *Doctrine in the Church of England*. For the Church as a whole—no change! The lying doctrine of Sin is still taught in Bible, Prayer Book, and Church. The Fall, says the Report on Doctrine, is symbolical, but it still says in *Romans* v. 12:—

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

It still says in the Catechism:—

For being by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath, we are hereby [baptism] made the children of grace.

The whole apparatus of Atonement and Salvation is built up on this mythological foundation of the Creation and Fall: and upon this is built up the huge organisation of the churches, with a hundred thousand full-time paid advocates whose living depends upon this lying doctrine. The Freethinkers have all the arguments on their side: the Priests have all the dubs on theirs, so they can afford to sit pretty. But they can't afford to give up their outworn creed, and don't intend to—whatever the verdict of the monuments!

Inaugurated by the Mayor of Blyth, and supported by the *Evening Chronicle*, a campaign is under way to rid the country of the idiotic trash which masquerades as "children's comics." A selection of American crime and horror comics, purchased in Blyth, were sent by the *Chronicle* to the Mayor, who, horrified by what he saw and read, forwarded the parcel to the Home Secretary with a demand for the suppression of the sale of such poison. The reply received was that there is insufficient grounds for prosecution.

There lies before me now a typical specimen, which was originally bought and read by a "child" of over 30 years.

(Continued on next page)

BRANCH LINE

READERS who live in the vicinity of towns where an active branch of the National Secular Society exists may like information as to what form their current activity takes. The following is based on information given by several of our branches, and details of the forthcoming lectures may enable you to plan ahead.

BRADFORD

In addition to the usual Sunday meetings, the branch is experimenting with a new series of weekly debates and discussions commencing Tuesday, October 19, at 7-30 p.m., in the Mechanics' Saloon. There will be talks by "Luke Straight" and other unrepentants, with the discussion free and easy. (The mask of "Luke Straight," we imagine, will not hide the Day-light.) The Sunday evening meetings at 6-45 in the Mechanics' Institute (Second Floor) contain an interesting assortment. A visitor to Soviet Russia gives his impressions on October 17, to be followed by Colin McCall (October 24) on "Religion, the Modern Fight." Mr. Denny speaks on Personality (October 31), and the audience has its turn on "Open Night" (November 7). An illustrated lecture follows (November 14) on the Kirkstall Abbey Monks, and in succeeding weeks U.N.O., Shaw, and International Relations are due for treatment. The first half of the indoor season closes with speeches by the N.S.S. speakers, A. H. Wharrad ("This Universal Church," December 12) and Mr. H. Day "Looking Forward to Christmas" (December 19). The Secretary, who has given efficient and continuous service for many years, is Mr. W. Baldie, 2, Kingsley Crescent, Baildon, Shipley.

GLASGOW

The Sunday indoor meetings are, as usual, mainly held in the attractive McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street. Doors open at 6-30 p.m., the Chair taken at 7. The addresses are invariably followed by questions, discussion and opposition of a stimulating character. The next meeting has been arranged in the Central Halls, Bath Street, and will be addressed by F. J. Corina, well known in Yorkshire and certainly no newcomer to Glasgow, taking as his subject "New Gods for Old." Returning to the McLellan Galleries, the speaker on November 14 will be Guy Aldred, well known for his robust political and anti-clerical opinions, a friend of that also well known heretic, the late Duke of Bedford, and himself a popular figure on advanced platforms. He will speak on "What is Anarchism?" the Secretary of the Glasgow Secular Society (a branch of the N.S.S.) is Mr. J. Barrowman, 53, Rampart Avenue, Glasgow, W.3.

NOTTINGHAM

For the reason that leading members of the Nottingham Branch are also actively concerned with the Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society, which holds its meetings on Sunday, the branch meetings are held on Thursdays in the Trades Hall, Thurland Street (Room 7), at 7-30 p.m. "Palestine" is the subject of the next meeting, to be addressed by A. Elsmere on October 21. On November 18 J. W. Challand speaks about Secular Education, and on December 16 A. Hewitt will tell "Why I deny God." The chief N.S.S. speaker in the Nottingham area, T. M. Mosley, is also Hon. Secretary of the "Cosmo," where much free-thought propaganda finds expression. Meetings are held in the large Lecture Theatre, Technical College, Shakespeare Street, on Sundays, at 2-30. At this "Local Parliament" the average attendance is from 400 to 500. The Branch Secretary is T. M. Mosley, 63, Valley Road, Carlton.

WEST LONDON

Enjoying facilities for propaganda much in advance of any other branch, full use has been made of them. The outdoor season has again met with vast success in terms of effective well-attended meetings at Marble Arch, and also in sales of *The Freethinker* and literature. In these connections "Manager" Harry Cleaver and his team of helpers deserve to be "mentioned in dispatches." The Editorial Committee wish to record their deep appreciation for the work done in selling *The Freethinker*. Good use has been made of the new posters advertising *The Freethinker*, and the results have been encouraging to all. The indoor meetings, held in the Laurie Arms (see Lecture Notices) are now under way. A lady journalist, Monica Whately, gives a talk about Africa, on October 17, and the following week, L. Ebury will speak on "Science, Religion and Progress." The syllabus is then varied with a debate (October 31) between Frank Stefani and H. Cutner (N.S.S.) on Spiritualism, a subject which our representative is well qualified to handle. Subsequent speakers will include Basil Bradlaugh Bonner, Victor Neuberg and P. Victor Morris. Meanwhile the outdoor meetings will continue, if somewhat less systematically. The Branch Secretary is C. H. Cleaver, 29a, Dunraven Road, Shepherd's Bush, W.12.

[We hope to publish news of other branches later.]

G.H.T.

Joseph McCabe

His name is Joseph, synonym for Flight;
 One Joseph Mistress Potiphar did flee;
 Another Joseph, in the dead of night,
 To Egypt, fled Herodian infamy.
 But Joe McCabe is ever full of fight;
 Once only was the man a refugee;
 He fled the Roman Church, to our delight,
 Embraced the truth, and henceforth lived carefree.

Say not he wasted time in twelve long years,
 In which, self-chosen prisoner, he stayed;
 It oft takes time to overcome one's fears,
 And the true Christian always is afraid.
 But Joe won through; in manhood and in age
 To be our "Anti-Christ," revered and sage.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

Inquisitiveness is the besetting sin of woman. Man would never have discovered this but for his overmastering curiosity.—C.C.

The Verdict of the Monuments

(Concluded from page 334)

It is a shilling volume containing ten tales, the first telling in pictures the story of Frankenstein's monster and his (or its) wooing of a resurrected murderess. The last, a more credible tale, treats of a Russian atomic-scientist who discovers he is immune from atomic radiation, but who is transformed by degrees into a human hydrogen bomb and finally detonated in a street accident.

If the Home Secretary is powerless, people in all walks and from all parts of the country have communicated with the mayor promising active support in his campaign. What one misses in the quotations from their letters printed in the *Chronicle* are suggestions that the latest fashions in crime and immorality are due to absence of religious influence and that horror comics are a poor substitute for the collection of (not always readable) Jewish writings known as the Bible.

Catholic Counter-Reformation of the 20th Century

By F. A. RIDLEY
(Concluded from page 327)

ROME AND THE FUTURE

The Catholic counter-Reformation of the 16th century allied itself with the then declining feudal system against the then up-and-coming bourgeoisie and against the scientific revolution sponsored by the new social order. Over much of Europe it succeeded, with the support of those feudal and conservative interests which the then contemporary political and scientific revolution threatened with destruction. However, whilst the Catholic Church survived, it has not remained static: "development," and not only in Newman's theological sense, continued: not only did the sun "move" according to Galileo, but the Church which condemned Galileo, she, too, kept on moving! Feudalism in the terrestrial sphere, and the Ptolemaic cosmogony in the celestial spheres, have both gone. But, here below, the Vatican is still with us! Moreover, by a process of social alchemy, Rome, the erstwhile enemy of capitalist "usury," is now Wall Street's major ally in the current "Cold War."

CATHOLICISM AND THE SOCIAL ORDER

Why must we suppose that this is the final, the ultimate stage in Rome's millennial "development"? In, say, two centuries—let alone two thousand years time—what will then the ancient chameleon be defending? Socialism, Communism, Capitalism? One thing, at least, is quite certain: the Vatican will defend *Catholicism* to the bitter end! Already, we watch the familiar technique of sending out exploratory parties into the Future. Her recent social experiment with "Worker Priests" constitutes a striking example. In America, there are even Catholic "Anarchists," apparently recognised by the Church. For Rome does not take up a cause until she thinks that it is going to win: like Talleyrand, she declares that "we" are winning, even though who "we" are, is not quite clear—yet! There is nothing inherent in any particular social system which obligates Catholic support. It was the Reformers, not the Vatican, who advocated "the sacred right to private enterprise," whilst Rome still denounced banking as usury. Rome has been, in succession, servile, feudal, capitalist, collectivist and even, with the Jesuits in Paraguay (17th and 18th centuries), communistic. She will be—whatever it pays her to be! The Jesuits and their Church, we have not forgotten, specialise in growing "long necks."

In his *Power and Secret of the Papacy*, R. Fuelop-Miller observes that in the 19th century, two men, and two only, realised clearly that the future of the world lay with the working-classes: Karl Marx and Pope Leo XIII. Today, the ideologies created or "developed" by these two men contend for mastery as apparently deadly and irreconcilable foes. To the Rationalist, a third ideology, that founded upon critical reason, appears to be, ultimately, more powerful and more worthy of eventual victory. To-day, for the first time in history, Rationalism enjoys a mass-basis in a scientific culture. It would, as we have indicated above, be rash to assume that "the ghost of the Roman Empire," of the greatest of political institutions, can or will be finally laid by any purely *political* system, be it capitalist, communist, or by some other future one as yet unknown. The politics of the Church spring from its Faith, and Faith cannot be destroyed in the field of political action, but only in that of the critical reason of mankind. It is the critical

reason of man, playing upon and constantly reinterpreting his ever-accumulating stores of experience and knowledge, that will eventually arrest the present Catholic drive to world power and which will ultimately transform the Vatican and its Triple Crown into a remote and terrifying memory of human adolescence.

Correspondence

FATHER DIVINE

Further to your article of May 21 last entitled "Jehovah Crosses the Atlantic," I have just read a book published this year in America by Sara Harris giving the life-story of, and a lot of interesting information about, the Father Divine religion which seems to be quite a big thing in some parts of U.S.A.

There was quite a strong contingent of them here in Melbourne, at least they appeared to be so. Each Saturday's paper had a big advertisement for the operations of the forthcoming week, but since the death of a wealthy believer who was the chief supporter since she had a trip to U.S.A. and was there converted, the show seems to have stagnated.

Last year, in April, at the City Town Hall there was a huge banquet which ran from about 6 p.m. to near midnight, with songs and praise for the empty chairs, where Father and Mrs. God sat in spirit, we were assured. This year at the same date, since the death of the millionairess, it was celebrated at a suburban hall with just ordinary eats. And there were no red virgins from some headquarters who the previous year advocated international universal chastity, apparently for the whole earth. And it was all FREE! FREE!!

The Freethinker is much appreciated by at least a few of us.—
Yours, etc.,

Melbourne, Australia.

H. M. SARA.

ROMAN CATHOLICISM

Obedience is the first rule for every would-be nun, and an Irish reader of this journal assures me that novices have been rejected as unsuitable for a religious vocation after questioning orders such as the following:—

"Wash that flight of stairs, beginning at the bottom and working up."

"Scrub out this room. Here is a toothbrush to do it with."
The same informant relates that her sister, who went into an Irish convent to have her baby, wrote home and said she had not had a bath for a month, because someone had stolen her swimming costume. It is considered a sin by R.C.s to see one's whole body.

It takes a spiritual understanding lacking in Secularists to grasp the superiority of such a truly religious moral code.

P.V.M.

THE "STONE"

Why was it necessary for the famous stone to be rolled away to allow the Jesus, of the Gospels to emerge on his alleged resurrection, seeing that it is later recorded that he could pass through doors as easily as any ectoplasm at a séance? Surely, with soldiers on guard outside the improvised tomb, it would have been a much more dramatic event for his etherealised body to have passed through the solid rock and then to have waited to materialise before Mary and the rest. There would then have been no room for all the contradictions about this story which have been so ably set forth by Thomas Paine in his *Age of Reason*.—Yours, etc.,
D. H. W.

MARIA MONK UP TO DATE

Freethinkers would like to read America's modern version of Maria Monk, Blanche Lee's *My Convent Daze*. She gives a lively account of hell among the nuns, no holds barred. Blanche was placed by trusting parents in the holy house to be educated; she did nothing but slave in the laundry, pray and do penance under female Simon Legrees, among a lot of tough females. The 67-page booklet is a revelation of the effects of religion under wraps, with comic relief quite free of all wraps.—Yours, etc.,
JAMES F. KIRKHAM.

Canada.

NEXT WEEK

MITHRAS, THE GOD OF LIGHT

By H. CUTNER